

Wild

Australian bushwalkers' guide to the wilderness

Spring
(October-December) 1995, no 58
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ISSN 1030-469X



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04

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AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Established 1981

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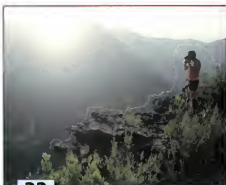
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WARNING

The activities covered by this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.

Cover Jacqueline Down contemplates the plunge on the descent from Mt Gould, Tasmania. Mt Byron is ahead. **Stephen Down**

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Publisher Wild Publications Pty Ltd

ACN 006 748 938

Printing York Press

Colour reproduction ScanaGraphix Pty Ltd

Distribution Gordon and Gotch Limited

Subscription rates are currently \$27.80 for one year (four issues), \$49.95 for two years, or \$73.40 for three years, by surface mail to addresses in Australia. Add \$9.00 for each four issues to overseas addresses.

When moving, advise us immediately of your new and old addresses to avoid lost or delayed copies. Please also send your address sheet received with a copy of *Wild*.

Advertising rates are available on request.

Copy deadlines (advertising and editorial):

8 October (summer issue), 15 January (autumn),

8 April (winter), 15 July (spring).

See below for publication dates.

Contributions, preferably well illustrated with slides, are welcome. *Guide-lines for Contributors* are available on receipt of a stamped, addressed envelope. Wherever possible, written submissions should be supplied on a three- and a-half-inch floppy disk in either IBM or Apple format. Please specify which format, program and version number. Hard copy should also be supplied. If not on disk, submissions should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of sheets of A4 paper.

Please ensure that submissions are accompanied by an envelope and sufficient postage.

Names and addresses should be written on disks, manuscripts and photos. While every care is taken, we do not accept responsibility for material submitted. Articles represent the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of the publisher.

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Phairan, Vic 3181, Australia.

Phone (03) 9826 5482

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Wild is published quarterly in the middle of the month before cover date (cover dates: January–March, April–June, July–September, October–December) by Wild Publications Pty Ltd. The *Wild* logo (ISSN 1039-669X) is registered as a trade mark, and the use of the name is prohibited. All material copyright 1995 Wild Publications Pty Ltd. All rights reserved. None of the contents of this publication may be reproduced without first obtaining the written consent of the publisher. *Wild* attempts to verify advertising, track notes, route descriptions, maps and other information, but cannot be held responsible for errors, omissions, incomplete or misleading material.

EDITORIAL

THE PACE ACCELERATES

Change is a constant at *Wild*

After almost 15 years you might think there would be little need for change at *Wild*. The fact is, however, that producing *Wild* is an evolutionary process. Since its inception it has been subject to constant change and, if anything, the pace of change is increasing. Not only are we always refining the product as our skill and experience grows but our readers—you!—are changing too, as are the very nature of our beloved Australian bush and the ways in which we seek recreation and spiritual refreshment in it. If *Wild* is to remain a source of inspiration and education in such matters it must be a flowing 'stream' rather than a stagnant 'pool'.

However, let me hasten to assure you that the basic 'formula' you have come to expect, even demand, of *Wild* will not change. You will not see change driven by expediency. You can expect the continuation of *Wild*'s strict focus on the rucksack sports, its obsession with quality, its genuine commitment to the environment, and its determination to refrain from editorial compromise—by avoiding, for example, the common practice of choosing articles on the basis of their appeal to advertisers rather than to readers; and other even less subtle forms of 'advertorial' such as the editorial promotion of selected advertisers. Such expediencies would undermine any magazine's credibility and readers would come to treat not only the editorial content but also the claims of its advertisers with scepticism.

Starting with the last issue, no 57, we have reintroduced ratings into our Gear and Equipment Surveys. These are in the form of the familiar 'bullets' allocated for various criteria to readily indicate how well each surveyed product rates. (The more bullets the better the rating.) Not used since *Wild* no 33, such ratings are a controversial subject, particularly with those manufacturers (usually also advertisers) whose products may not have rated highly! While we go to considerable lengths to have the surveys written by competent and impartial contributors and to carefully vet them in draft form (and, starting with this issue, every survey is checked by an independent referee as well as by our own staff), all human assessment they may be subject to error. They should be accepted as a convenient starting-point for your own assessment rather than as the 'last word'. (To assist you in this process, in *Wild* no 56 we introduced a 'Points to watch' box with each Gear Survey.) On review, we felt that the value of survey 'bullets' outweighed their disadvantages.

In order to assist our younger and less experienced readers we are publishing more instruction. As part of this change, with this issue *Wild* Ideas reverts to its original name, Getting Started. Glenn Tempest's article on bush hygiene, which starts on page 25, is the first major instructional article under this heading.

Speaking of long-time *Wild* contributor Glenn Tempest, his wife Karen makes her

Wild debut this issue—in a novel way. Rather than the usual track notes, the free booklet—written by Karen—bound into the middle of this issue should be of interest to all of us in our quest to keep our stomachs happy in the bush.

As I have mentioned in previous Editorials, a major aim of *Wild* over the last few years has been to improve the standard of the writing we publish. One way we have sought to do this is by introducing the *Wild* Article of the Year Award. The winner of the second such \$750 award, chosen from articles appearing in nos 54–57, inclusive, is Quentin Chester for his article on gear published in *Wild* no 57. This award gives us particular satisfaction, as Quentin—whose column *The Wild Life* appears in each issue of *Wild*—is a regular *Wild* contributor and clearly one of the outstanding writers in his field.

In the 1995 *Wild* Readership Survey, inserted in *Wild* no 56, we asked a question we had not previously included in a survey: over the last few years has the quality of *Wild* improved? Stayed the same? Got worse? We were gratified to learn that the changes we have recently made must be making their mark since the majority of you (55 per cent) told us we have improved. (Thirty-eight per cent said we've stayed the same, while three per cent said we've become worse.)

New Zealand readers will be pleased to know that, effective from nos 57 and 23 respectively, *Wild* and *Rock* have been available from newsgroups in their country.

New subscribers are the winners under the offer announced in *Wild* no 57 (and on page 20 in this issue); for a limited time and while stocks last, we are giving them a free *Wild* back issue of their choice for each year of a new *Wild* subscription.

Finally, after seven and a half years as our Advertising Manager, Stephen Hamilton left us at the end of June for an extended overseas sojourn. While he will be missed, he spent his last five months with us training his friend Peter Woolford in this key role at *Wild*. Farewell Stephen; welcome Peter. ■

Chris Baxter

Environmental impact statement

Wild is printed on Ozone paper, which is made of 35 per cent pre-consumer waste and 15 per cent post-consumer waste that has been recycled and oxygen-bleached. The cover is printed on Topkote paper, which is made of oxygen-bleached 40 per cent recycled pre-consumer waste and 10 per cent post-consumer waste. The cover has a water-based varnish (not an environmentally detrimental UV or plastic finish). We recycle the film used in the printing process. *Wild* staff run an environmentally aware office. Waste paper is recycled, printer ribbons are re-inked and waste is kept to an absolute minimum. We invite your comments and recommendations; please contact the Managing Editor.

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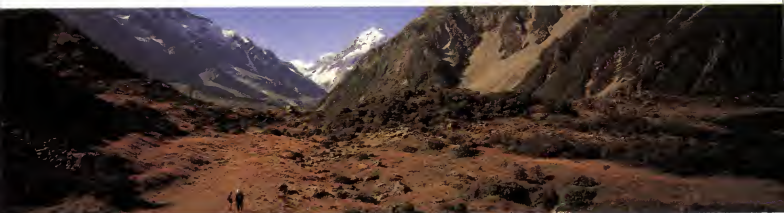
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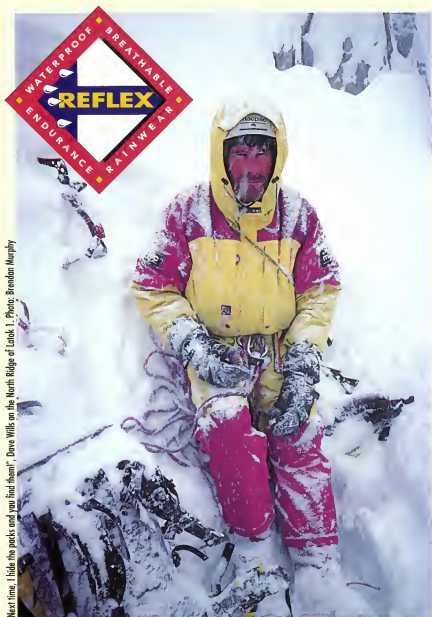
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LONG DROP

Australian in discovery of the Southern hemisphere's deepest cave

A kilometre down under, down under

Australian Alan Warild, one of the world's most accomplished cavers (see profile in *Wild* no 52), teamed up with a French expedition last summer to push Papua New Guinea's Muruk Cave to a depth of over 1000 metres, making it the first kilometre-deep cave to have been discovered in the Southern hemisphere. (The 1000 metres milestone is somewhat akin to the magic 8000 metres altitude in mountaineering.) The breakthrough came when a sump at 600 metres was passed for the first time by diving. This obstacle proved to be 60 metres long and seven metres deep. The stream in the cave was found to be only a tributary of the main river which runs through the entire system. The French plan to return to the cave in 1998.

In September this year Australian cave-divers, sponsored in part by *Wild*, will return to the world-renowned Cocklebirdy Cave on the Nullarbor Plain and attempt to 'push' the flooded passage beyond the present record distance from the cave entrance of 6090 metres. Due to the horrifying logistics of such an expedition—the 'Base Camp' will be in a chamber four kilometres from the entrance, most of which is flooded passage—the 'Cocklebirdy Cave Diving Expedition 1995' will be the first to attempt to extend the known limits of the cave since separate French and Australian expeditions confirmed Cocklebirdy as one of the world's longest flooded caves in 1983.

Stephen Buntin

Record break

Tiger-walker and dedicated record-breaker Peter Treseder has failed in an attempt to run unsupported across Australia from west to east. Treseder's plan came unstuck just 300 kilometres after leaving Steep Point, Western Australia, when he broke his foot. He was forced to hobble 100 kilometres to safety.

Food folklore

Mark Moravec, the secretary of the Australian Folklore Project, is conducting an interesting and unusual survey of the food customs and traditions of bushwalkers. Himself a bush-walker and a life member of the Wilderness Society, Moravec wishes to document everything from the types of food and meals that walkers carry and prepare to favourite meal-time topics of conversation around the campfire. If you would like to participate in this survey or would like more information, please contact him at the Folklore Project, 104 Howitt St, Ballarat, Vic 3350.

Corrections and amplifications

From *Wild* no 54: in the Equipment Survey of rockclimbing gyms mention is made of assertions by the Climbing Wall Industry



The view from Mt Difficult in Victoria's northern Grampians; walker registration regulations on the horizon? Chris Baxter

Group in the USA that only 'dynamic' climbing rope should be used for top-roping in gyms due to the danger of uncushioned, 'shock' forces that may result from falling on a static rope. However, it has been pointed out that there is a wide range of so-called 'static' ropes on the market, a number of which have stretch and loading characteristics that are not dissimilar to that of dynamic rope.

From *Wild* no 57: Polartec was misspelt in the Snowgum advertisement on page 2. The names in the photo caption on page 15 should have been reversed. Almost an Independent Trekker's PO Box number (page 20) is 136, not 126. The photo on page 33 is of Bruce Connor and should have been credited to Carmel Bohan.

QUEENSLAND

Worthy race

The 19th annual Brisbane Valley 100 Canoeathon is to be held on the weekend of 7-8 October 1995. This event, which involves up to 400 competitors in a 100 kilometre teams or individual race along the upper reaches of the Brisbane River, raises funds for the Queensland Spastic Welfare League. Anyone interested in competing should contact Justin Francis (Special Events Officer), Queensland Spastic Welfare League, PO Box 386, Fortitude Valley, Qld 4006, or phone him on (07) 3358 8011.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Kowmung and Cocks Rivers 'closed'

Long-standing access routes to the lower Kowmung and Cocks Rivers have recently been closed to walkers. Entry to the area within three kilometres of the stored water formed by Warragamba Dam is normally prohibited, but bushwalkers have had special approval to use a number of corridors in order to pass through the lower parts of these rivers within the exclusion zone. The White Dog-Mt Cookem route is now the only permitted corridor in the Cocks and Kowmung Rivers area.

During the June long weekend walkers were herded from the other routes and warned of the \$10 000 fine that applies to breaches of the usual exclusion zone. The NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs is presently searching for evidence of the previous agreement with Sydney Water which permitted through access to bushwalkers. Bushwalkers wishing to protest at the closures should write, as soon as possible, to Craig Knowles, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Level 33, 1 Farrer Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000.

Andrew Cox

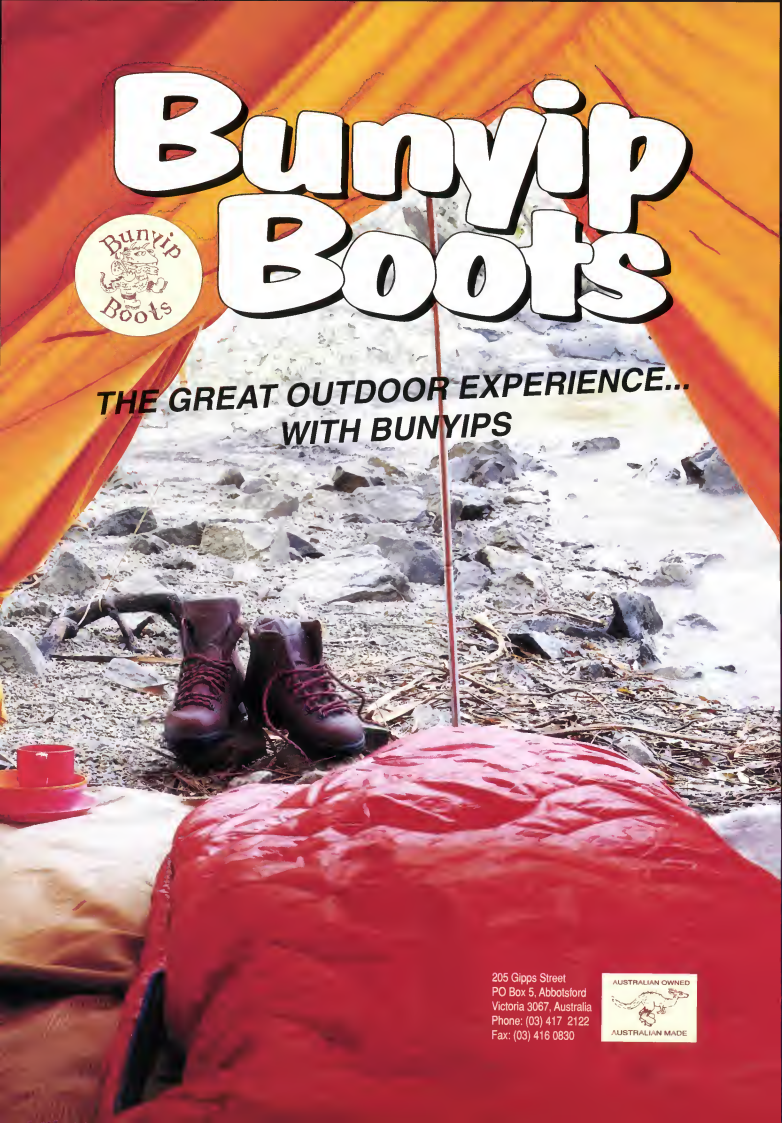
Cross skiers

The committee representing the interests of cross-country skiers within the NSW Ski Association has broken away from that body after being refused permission to lobby the National Parks Service over planning for cross-country skiing. The new group, to be

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known as Kosciuszko Cross-country Skiers (KCros), claims it will continue to represent all cross-country skiers who use Kosciuszko National Park, independent of downhill skiing interests. It can be contacted at PO Box 57, Cooma, NSW 2630.

Basil bites back

The April issue of the *NSW Public Health Bulletin* includes a report of a fox biting sleeping campers in Kangaroo valley. The suspected culprit, a six kilogram adolescent, was subsequently trapped and shot. After an autopsy and extensive testing it was confirmed that the fox was not carrying rabies and 'that there was no public health risk'.

Wild Diary

Information about rucksack-sports events for publication in this department should be sent to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

September	30- Basic skills 2 Oct Instructor C	NSW	(02) 949 2414
	30-2 Oct Advanced sea proficiency assessment C	NSW	(064) 52 3626
October	3-6 Ski & Outdoor Trace Show (trade only)	ACT	(03) 9482 1206
	7 12-hour Rogaine	ACT	(06) 248 7142
	12-hour Rogaine	WA	(09) 275 4734
	7-8 Basic skills instructor courses—Tilika	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	8 and 24-hour Rogaines	Qld	(07) 3268 3338
	14 Spring 8-hour Rogaine	Vic	(03) 9890 4352
	14-16 White-water instructor assessment C	NSW	(044) 65 1089
	Introductory canoe/ kayak course	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	21-22 White-water instructor and 29 courses—assessment C	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	22-23 Basic skills instructor training C	NSW	(02) 809 6993
	28 12-hour Rogaine	SA	(08) 259 7558
	28-29 Advanced course C	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	29-30 Introductory sea kayak course	NSW	(02) 417 5936
November	11-12 Spring 24-hour Rogaine	Vic	(03) 9890 4352
	12 Proficiency courses/ testing C	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	12-13 White-water proficiency C	NSW	(02) 809 6993
	18-19 Basic skills instructor courses—assessment C	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	25 6-hour Soapstone R	NSW	(042) 26 5544
	25-26 Introductory canoe/ kayak course	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
December	2-3 Basic skills assessment C	NSW	(02) 949 2414
	Sea proficiency training course and assessment C	NSW	(042) 68 1001
	9-10 JLV Challenge M	Vic	(052) 61 4686
	Introductory canoe/ kayak course	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	Introductory sea kayak course	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	17 Proficiency courses/ testing C	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	27-31 Red Cross Murray Marathon C	Vic	(046) 9685 9813

B bushwalking C canoeing M multisports R rogaine
RC rockclimbing S skiing

VICTORIA

Grampians walker registration

As from 1 June this year all bushwalkers who intend to visit the Major Mitchell Plateau must register with the National Park Visitor Centre at Halls Gap, phone (053) 56 4381. The decision has been prompted by recent overcrowding at campsites and a number of problems resulting from inexperienced or ill-equipped parties—most having failed to leave trip details in case of emergency—getting into difficulties. Visitor numbers and their impact will be monitored in order to assess the need for a stricter system of regulation in the most fragile parts of the park. Of particular concern is the number of large parties—sometimes with more than 30 members—walking in the area, many lacking minimal-impact skills. A similar registration system is being considered for other parts of the Grampians, including the Fortress and Mt Difficult areas.

John Chapman

Mick Hull dies

Veteran Australian skier and one of the pioneers of Victorian cross-country and downhill skiing, Mick Hull, died in April at the age of 85. Mick is probably best known for his part in the now infamous 1936 winter incident on Mt Bogong when he, Howard Michell and Cleve Cole endured a gruelling week during which they attempted to find a way off the mountain. Cleve Cole died of hyperthermia on arrival at Omeo Hospital.

Taking the challenge

Following the success of last year's inaugural JLV Challenge multi-sports competition, which pitted competitors in a series of stages taking them from the summit of Mt Buller to the streets of Melbourne, the second annual event will take place on the weekend of 9-10 December this year. The event, which is open to individuals and teams, includes a gruelling opening run from Mt Buller to Lake Eildon, two paddle stages, and over 120 kilometres of cycling. Prospective entrants should contact Challenge Events Management, PO Box 254, Torquay, Vic 3228. Phone (052) 61 4686, fax (052) 61 3245.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

The big backyard

Burkes Backyard Cave in the Gregory River National Park—which lay undiscovered until 1993—has recently been found to be at least 19.2 kilometres long. This cave now ranks as Australia's fourth longest, behind Western Australia's Old Homestead Cave (27 kilometres), the Jenolan Tourist Caves system in NSW and the Exit Cave system in Tasmania (both over 20 kilometres).

SB

Larapinta Trail

Work is progressing steadily on this impressive 220 kilometre track along the West Macdonnell Ranges near Alice Springs. Of the 13 sections planned, six are now complete; two new sections near Ormiston Gorge were opened recently. The best walk using the existing stretches of track is a three-to-four-

day walk from Alice Springs to Stanley Chasm following sections one, two and three. Good track notes, complete with detailed maps of the completed sections, are available for a small fee from the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory, PO Box 1046, Alice Springs, NT 0870. The track is scheduled for completion in 1998.

JC



Wild Special Adviser Geoff Law was lucky to escape the recent eruption of Indonesia's Mt Merapi which killed 40 people. See his article in *Wild* no 56. Law

OVERSEAS

Hot stuff

All *Wild* readers who enjoyed Geoff Law's article 'Fire in the Sky' in *Wild* no 56 will be interested to hear that Indonesia's Mt Merapi lived up to its reputation as that country's most active volcano when it erupted in November last year, killing 40 villagers living on its slopes and causing 5000 others to be evacuated. Trekkers and travellers planning to climb Mt Merapi are advised to take extreme care and to check on conditions at the Vogel Hostel in Kaliurang at the base of the mountain.

In August 1994, Bali's Mt Batur—which is climbed by thousands of trekkers and tourists each year—erupted, showering adjacent villages with ash. Tourists have been advised not to climb the mountain.

Jim remembered

Eric Truscott, a Major in the Australian army, has joined five other soldiers to trace the footsteps of more than 20 Australians who participated in an heroic but disastrous raid on Singapore 51 years ago. The original Special Operations team paddled folding kayaks on an epic 200 kilometre journey, island-hopping through what is now Indonesia after being thwarted in their mission to sink Japanese warships in Singapore Harbour. Truscott's team, paddling modern military canoes, visited the many remote islands along the route taken by the commandos as they tried to flee—ultimately without success—from the Japanese, meeting villagers who had aided the Australian soldiers in their desperate plight. ■

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



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NORTHERN TERRITORY

Snowgum

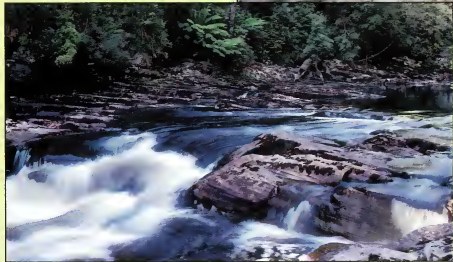
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BUSH BLUNDERS

Victorian bureaucracies bungle on

Green split?

The decision by the Queensland branch of the Greens Party to direct preferences to some National-Liberal Party coalition candidates in the Queensland State election in July caused controversy among the environmental movement in the wake of the Goss Government's near defeat. Both the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society criticised the Queensland Greens. The ACF accused the party of sacrificing its environmental agenda in an effort to a) win support for a referendum on establishing an upper house in the State's parliament, and b) gain coalition preferences in the coming federal election. National Greens leader Bob Brown defended the actions of the local branch of the party—which some consider to have been instrumental in the defeat of the government



'Before': the Donaldson River, Tarkine area, north-west Tasmania. *Geoff Law. Top, 'after': work last winter on the new road into the heart of the Tarkine. Russell Hawkins*

in several seats—raising the prospect of a damaging division in green politics in Australia.

Good number

In early July the environment movement cautiously welcomed the Federal Government's decision to aim for the protection of 15 per cent of the area covered by forests at the time of European arrival in Australia. The decision—part of the government's attempt to establish a nationwide system of reserves designed, in part, to phase out the wood-chipping of old-growth forests—was an unexpected improvement on the previously mooted goal of protecting ten per cent of ancient forests.

In August the ACF and the Wilderness Society joined forces for a 'Woodchipping is Wrong' campaign, including major Press advertising.

Alps progress

The campaign to have the Australian Alps nominated for the World Heritage List is continuing to gain momentum. In recent correspondence with the Victorian National Parks Association the NSW State Premier, Bob Carr, has confirmed his government's intention to proceed with the nomination.

Such a step would come none too soon. An article in the autumn 1995 issue of the CSIRO's environmental research magazine *Ecos* describes the damage that has been done to Australia's high country by grazing cattle. (Despite an attempt by Victoria's Department of Conservation & Natural Resources in 1992 to ban cattle from the Alpine National Park, a legal challenge by graziers assured the continuing presence of cattle in fragile alpine environments for at least another four years.) The article concludes: 'Ecologists have shown that grazing and conservation cannot exist in harmony.'

The 'Kirkpatrick Report', which last year recommended the World Heritage List nom-

ination proceed, identified grazing as a major contributor to the degradation of Australia's alpine areas.

See Action Box item 1 to see what role you can play in this important campaign.

Forest options

Further division appeared in the ranks of the forestry industry in June when a representative of CSR's softwood division criticised the National Association of Forest Industries for 'trying to hang on to the past' by supporting native-forest logging in preference to softwood plantation resources.

Meanwhile, a meeting of 90 scientists in Shepparton, Victoria, has discussed the enormous potential for job-creation and environmental protection that would result from the establishment of 1 000 000 hectares of new plantations across Australia over the next 25 years.

Poor management

A meeting of the Prime Minister's Science and Engineering Council in June was told that there is wide agreement among scientists and industry leaders that past land management practices have seriously degraded the country's agricultural base through declining water quality, worsening land fertility and the possible impact of the greenhouse effect.

High returns

The Wilderness Society has congratulated Australian Newsprint Mills for its research into developing alternatives to wood pulp for the manufacture of newsprint, including the use of hemp fibre and flax.

In July, Victoria joined South Australia and Tasmania in approving trial plantations of Indian hemp, the fibrous stems of which were once widely used in the production of paper, cloth and rope.

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QUEENSLAND

Cape York doubt

Plans to create 'Australia's largest wilderness area' on Cape York Peninsula were thrown into doubt in July by the massive swing against the Goss Labor Government in the State election. The proposal, which involves the linking together of a series of existing and new parks stretching along the peninsula's east coast, took the form of an election promise from the narrowly returned government.

Wrong number

Telstra is planning to construct a communication facility on top of Mt Bowen, the highest peak on Hinchinbrook Island. While there will be no need to cut an access track to the summit—construction is to be by helicopter—crowning the island with a structure of this type will have a devastating effect on the wilderness values of the island. A suitable alternative is apparently available, although it would require two facilities at already developed sites. The construction of this facility would be an undesirable precedent given that Hinchinbrook Island is the world's largest island National Park and is also a part of Queensland's World Heritage Area.

John Chapman

NEW SOUTH WALES

Dam response

The Environmental Impact Statement for the Warragamba Dam is soon to be released for public comment (see Green Pages in *Wild* no 56 for a detailed analysis of the dam issue). A comprehensive action kit—which includes the original *Gangarang Sketch Map* showing the Kowmung River, compiled by Myles Dunphy—is available from the Kowmung Committee to assist those opposed to the dam raising in writing a submission. Anyone who joins the committee is permitted legal access—after notification—to the lower Kowmung and Cox Rivers, recently closed to bushwalkers (see *Wild* Information in this issue). Submissions responding to the environmental impact statement are due by November.

Many politicians and senior bureaucrats—including Premier Bob Carr, the Managing Director of Sydney Water and the Minister for Planning, Craig Knowles—have been taken through the spectacular lower Kowmung River this year in an attempt to show them at first hand the area threatened by the \$279 million project.

See Action Box item 2.

Watch your head

Walkers, climbers and others following tracks through Bungonia Gorge need to be alert for massive boulders which may be dislodged from the quarry on a ridge overlooking the gorge. The legality of the company's operations—which could possibly be damaging the State Recreation Area and the Geological Heritage Site within it, and possibly endangering the safety of walkers—is being investigated by the Department of Minerals and Energy.

Andrew Cox

Mushroom back-down

Plans to build a large mushroom-composting plant in the headwaters of Wollemi Creek, surrounded by the Wollemi National Park and wilderness area (see Green Pages, *Wild* no 57), have been abandoned after local residents took legal action to force the developers to prepare an environmental impact statement. The project's backers are believed to be looking elsewhere for a site. Many bushwalkers and their clubs gave generously to the fund-raising appeal.

AC

Wilderness promise under threat

A promise by the newly elected Labor Government to declare or enlarge 15 wilderness areas along the NSW eastern seaboard in its first year of office may be threatened by National Parks Service plans to conduct an extensive consultation process on the proposed wilderness boundaries. More than a year ago, the previous government backed away from plans to declare even conservatively-sized wilderness areas following a vocal, rural-led backlash.

After including declaration of the areas in its election platform, the Carr Government now has a clear mandate to declare or enlarge the wilderness areas that the previous government reneged on. There are fears that re-exhibiting wilderness boundaries for a third time, for areas which were nominated as wilderness more than five years ago, will allow opponents to mount a stronger anti-wilderness campaign.

See Action Box item 3.

Off the track

In response to the Green Pages item in *Wild* no 56 on track work between the Clyde and Shoalhaven Rivers—in which Andrew Cox criticised the work for potentially degrading the Ettrema and Budawang wilderness areas—the Shoalhaven City Council writes: 'It is a pity that "AC" has not done his or her homework. The development of the proposed walking track...is a proposal to "track harden" existing tracks and trails through the area where those tracks and trails have already been eroded or damaged. At no time does it go near or even threaten the Ettrema or Budawang wilderness areas.'

Andrew Cox replies: 'Detailed maps indicating the route of the Clyde River to Shoalhaven River track show it passing well inside the eastern side of the officially identified Ettrema and Budawang wilderness areas. Documents promoting the plan describe the upgrading of existing tracks and their use by an estimated 10 000 people a year. Small sections of new track will also be cut. Plans show a network of new tracks originating from campsites along the route...'

VICTORIA

Poor marks

A World Wide Fund for Nature report has given the Victorian Government a 'D' for its management of National Parks and reserves throughout the State. The report followed the findings of the State Auditor-General that the National Parks Service did not have the means to ensure that parks were being

managed in accordance with the *National Parks Act* 1975. The VNPA warned that the State's parks could suffer a 'death by a thousand cuts' as a result of increasing visitor numbers and concessions to mining, logging and grazing interests. Despite receiving 10 000 000 visitors every year, 80 per cent of Victoria's National Parks do not have a management plan. (For a discussion of the proliferation of roads, signs and other 'management tools' in Victoria's high country see the Editorial in *Wild* no 57.)

At about the same time, a CSIRO report found that Victoria's land management has been the worst in Australia and that two-thirds of the State's forests and woodlands have been cleared since European settlement.

Fee gaffe

Cross-country trail fees charged in Victorian Alpine resorts this winter fell by \$2.00 to the 1991 level of \$5.00—an unprecedented step apparently made necessary by bureaucratic failure to attain appropriate legislative ratification for the higher fees that were applied in 1994. Cross-country skiers are still wondering whether the Alpine Resorts Commission will be refunding \$2.00 in respect of every 1994 trail pass purchased.

A report by the Auditor-General in May found that the position concerning the ARC was unchanged since the Auditor-General's 1991 report which had stated: 'There was an absence of appropriate performance measures which provide assurance to the Government that the Commission is meeting the aims of the Tourism strategy and fulfilling its role and objectives under its legislation.'

Action Box

Readers can take action on the following matters covered in Green Pages in this issue.

1 Write to the Environment Minister, John Faulkner, and the Prime Minister, Paul Keating, (both c/- Parliament House, Canberra) urging the Federal Government to press ahead with the nomination. Contact your local member of Federal parliament asking for cooperation in the campaign.

2 Write to The Kowmung Committee for a comprehensive environmental impact statement action kit (\$10, or \$20 including membership of the committee): GPO Box 2090, Sydney, NSW 2001; phone (02) 233 4358. Donations to assist the campaign against the dam raising are also needed.

3 Write to Premier Bob Carr (Parliament House, Macquarie St, Sydney, NSW 2000) voicing opposition to any further delay in declaring the presently proposed wilderness boundaries.

4 For more information, contact the Wilderness Society, 130 Davey St, Hobart, Tas 7000.

5 Contact the Tarkine National Coalition by writing to PO Box 692, Quobla, Tas 7310.

6 If you want to be involved in the review process, write to the Planning Section, Parks & Wildlife Service, GPO Box 44A, Hobart, Tas 7001.



Ed Gavett on Buntaku Road
Himalayas, Pakistan. Photo Mark
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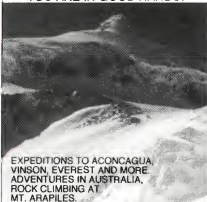
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A slippery slope

Victoria's Roads Corporation has found that it has some 'surplus land' adjacent to the Bogong High Plains road at Falls Creek. Despite other options available to it (including having it developed for public use), the corporation has elected to sell the land. Such a sale will establish market value for Alpine resort land, and conservationists are concerned that it will therefore be 'the thin end of the wedge'.

Ship of fools?

The *Herald-Sun* has quoted Minister for Tourism Pat McNamara as saying that the Victorian Government is spending \$800 000 to promote Victorian ski resorts—a taxpayer subsidy of this industry. McNamara is quoted as saying that 'Our [ski-resort] holidays are very much like a cruise-ship holiday. You are in an environment where everybody is up there and I think it makes for a unique experience.'

Illegal logging

Following the revelations in *Wild* no 57 concerning breaches of logging codes in a 'one-off' logging operation south of Myrtleford in the Alpine National Park in February, the Wilderness Society has forced the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources to admit that it has 'no documentation' regarding the logging and no intention of investigating such sticky questions as where the illegally obtained timber ended up and whether the department was paid its due royalties.

New park 'inadequate'

The VNPA has criticised the failure of the State government to heed its minimum recommended additions to protected areas in formulating the new Yarra Ranges National Park on Melbourne's doorstep. The new park of 76 000 hectares, which incorporates little more than existing closed water catchments, falls well short of the comprehensive park of 297 000 hectares proposed by the VNPA and supported by the Victorian environment movement.

Business as usual

A DCNR newsletter has announced the establishment of the National Parks Service Business Management Branch. Headed by a manager with qualifications in forestry and business studies, the department sees its main roles as including 'improving infrastructure and developments', 'putting products on a common footing' and 'improving its position in the market place'.

TASMANIA

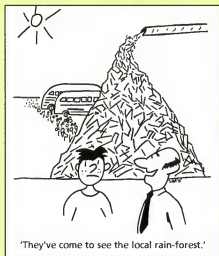
Locked out

Beginning at the height of the national wood-chip furor, padlocked gates have suddenly appeared on a number of forestry roads in Tasmania's South-west. The following roads are now blocked off to all but those who have managed to obtain a key from Forestry Tasmania (formerly the Tasmanian Forestry Commission): the South Weld, Manuka, East Picton, North Picton, Warra and Riveaux roads.

Forestry Tasmania claims that the gates are to deter vandals. However, the conservation movement believes that the function of the gates is to restrict access so that the public will not realise the full extent and severity of the clear-felling operations that are eroding Tasmania's South-west.

The gates have affected access by bushwalkers and rafters to the following locations: Huon Track to Blakes Opening (Riveaux Road); Mt Weld (South Weld Road); and the Huon River for rafting (Riveaux Road). So far, no gate has been established on the Picton Road, which provides access to Farmhouse Creek and the Federation Peak walking track.

Geoff Law



Cut down

Few Tasmanian forests were reprieved in the eventual decision of the Federal Government over export wood-chip licences earlier this year. In a last-minute concession to pro-logging State Labor Party MPs, logging was approved in the forests of the East Picton (formerly part of the Hartz Mountains National Park), Wylds Craig and the Weld valley, and in large tracts of the Tarkine wilderness.

Some key areas were reprieved: logging deeper into the South-west was put on hold by the decision not to allow further wood-chipping in the forests of the Huon valley near Blakes Opening. On the Great Western Tiers, logging has been stymied at Projection Bluff and Turnbridge Tier.

A decision on two coupes near the Picton River was postponed, but a massive clear-felling operation has been approved in a key tract of forest west of the river, in which logging will take place only 100 metres from the river.

See Action Box item 4.

GL

Living fossils

Forms of life previously unknown to science have been discovered in the tannin-stained waters of the Bathurst Channel, which drains Bathurst Harbour into Port Davey on the State's west coast. The new life-forms include invertebrates such as sponges and coral as well as a new species of skate. The channel is

already afforded protection as part of the South-west Tasmania World Heritage Area, although no one previously suspected the presence of unknown life in the area.

Tarkine outcry

The Tasmanian Government has succeeded in clearing the last four kilometres of rain forest required to build the controversial Heemskirk road through the nation's largest single rain-forest wilderness. The action sparked new efforts to obtain Federal Government intervention to save the site, on Tasmania's north-west coast. The cleared area contained stands of ancient myrtle beech along the previously untouched Donaldson River Gorge. A new organisation, the Tarkine National Coalition, has emerged to concentrate lobbying efforts. Its diverse membership includes environment groups, local government, industry, youth representatives and the Australian Greens Party.

Coalition coordinator, Peter Simms, has said that World Heritage listing is the only means of ensuring there will be no further degradation of the pristine old-growth temperate forests, and that rehabilitation of the cleared road site could still restore the region's integrity.

The Tarkine area, including the entire catchment of the Donaldson River, was recently listed on both the National Wilderness Inventory and the register of the National Estate.

Furthermore, three world conservation bodies have written to the Federal Government asking it to explain why recent decisions regarding native-forest logging in the South-west, and the failure to stop the Tarkine road, should not be seen as breaches of Australia's international obligations to protect Tasmania's World Heritage values.

See Action Box item 5.

Bill Pheasant and GL

Rotten luck

The Parks & Wildlife Service is battling a newly identified species of *Phytophthora*, or root rot, which has already taken a heavy toll of ancient pencil pines on the Central Plateau. Unlike previously known strains of the disease, which can only survive at fairly low altitudes, the new species is cold-tolerant and is threatening high-country plant communities for the first time.

The PWS has imposed a large quarantine area around Pine Lake in an attempt to prevent the disease from spreading. It is vitally important that this quarantine be respected.

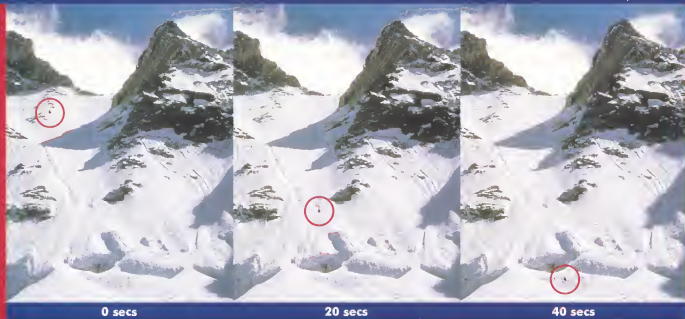
Big issues

The PWS is continuing its consultation process over the review of the management plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. PWS management plans are reviewed every five years; this one is due for revision in late 1997. Broad public consultation regarding possible improvement to the plan will take place from October this year until March 1996.

See Action Box item 6. ■

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, VIC 3181.

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HYGIENE FOR WALKERS

Bugs, bogs and band-aids, by Glenn Tempest

I was presenting a slide show for a bushwalking club a few years ago and finished by recounting an unpleasant experience I once had while washing my hair in a river on the Overland Track in Tasmania. A leech had entered the corner of my eye, slid under my lid and somehow made its way round to the back of my eyeball. I could feel it growing steadily larger as it feasted on my blood—a most unpleasant sensation. I described in detail how removing the leech had required the assistance of two helpers, an ice cream stick and the blunt end of a hot needle. When the lights came on an elderly lady purposefully approached me, her eyes wide with horror.

'Was that true,' she enquired, still looking slightly pale.

'Yeah,' I said. 'The leech was latched on to my...'

'No, no, no,' she interjected. 'You washed your hair in the river? Don't you know that washing your hair in a river is a terrible thing to do?'

For a moment I was baffled; then I realised what she meant. By washing my hair in the river I was, in fact, polluting it. I politely explained that the incident took place many years ago when such matters were rarely considered and that I would never dream of washing my hair in a river today. She was appeased. She was also quite correct. But while it's important to look after the environment it is equally important to consider how the environment relates directly to one's own hygiene, which in turn affects the health and enjoyment of those in your party.

Toilet training

Having a crap in the bush is not simply a matter of wandering behind the nearest boulder, dropping your pants, doing the business and then forgetting about it. The correct disposal of faeces is something every bushwalker should know and employ. Firstly, a suitable site must be found—not one which is simply out of sight of your fellow walkers. Stay at least 100 metres away from any water source and be careful to avoid small catchments and areas likely to flood during wet weather. Dig a hole about 15–20 centimetres deep using a plastic trowel or scraper. This depth will best take advantage of the soil's micro-organisms (which are important in speeding up decomposition) and will be deep enough to discourage animals from re-excavating your hole. Once relief is obtained it will be necessary to use a small stick to mix the faeces with the loose soil to further speed its rate of decomposition. After filling the hole with earth, cover it with leaves so that the ground doesn't appear to have been disturbed.

Your toilet paper should not be buried with the faeces as it takes too long to break down. Carry it back to your campfire and then burn it. If you don't have a campfire, store it in a plastic bag and carry it out with you. Some bushwalkers incorrectly burn their toilet paper on the spot and bury the ashes with the faeces. The chance—however small—of starting a bushfire is simply not worth the risk. Some years ago a friend of mine was burning his toilet paper when the flames got out of control. Clad only in thongs, he desperately stamped out the fire—an action which narrowly prevented a bushfire but seriously burnt his feet!

Disposal of faeces in the snow is often difficult and in some cases it may be impossible. Few cross-country skiers take the time to dig through to the ground and those that do are often confronted with soil that is frozen solid. Most skiers resort to digging a shallow hole in the snow and then covering it up. Out of sight, out of mind—at least through the winter months. The spring melt often reveals a revolting landscape dotted with piles of thawing faeces surrounding popular winter camping destinations. Many of our most beautiful alpine areas are now grossly polluted, which results in a serious health risk to all users regardless of the season. The situation has become so bad that camping has already been banned in a number of locations. The fact is that our alpine areas are too small and too sensitive to be abused in this way. It

won't be long before both bushwalkers and cross-country skiers visiting our alpine areas will be required to carry out all human waste in portable containers such as those now in common use across the USA. (Cattle dung, which may also pose a health risk, lies across many of our alpine regions as well—perhaps cattlemen will in future be required to clean up the mess with pooper scoopers!) Here in Australia waste removal is already recommended in some canyons, on river-rafting trips, and in environmentally fragile and high-use areas. There are a number of cheap ways to carry out human waste. Tupperware containers—with a dash of kitty litter—is one way; empty milk cartons and duct tape is another. You can even build your own poop-tube using a length of PVC pipe with a cap on one end and a screw lid on the other. These, and a host of other carry-out methods, are best described in Kathleen Meyer's book, *How to Shit in the Woods* (see Reviews in *Wild* no 53)—a campfire classic if ever there was one!

Drinking-water

Mainly as a result of the problems described above it is highly likely that many of our most remote lakes, creeks and rivers now



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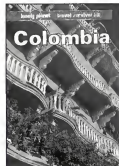
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GETTING STARTED

carry a variety of nasties such as *Escherichia coli* and *Giardia lamblia*. The use of a water purification system is now an unfortunate but often necessary part of bushwalking. For a comprehensive run-down on filtration systems read 'Water Fit to Drink' in *Wild* no 54. Water obtained from fresh snow is usually pure but take care not to collect any yellow snow by mistake!

Personal cleanliness

Wash your hands thoroughly after you have 'been to the toilet'. Use a biodegradable soap in hot water carried well away from the creek. Avoid washing your hands in food receptacles and instead pour the water directly over your hands. Longer bushwalks will occasionally require a full body wash—especially if you want to remain on good terms with those with whom you are sharing your tent. This involves a couple of billies of warm water carried to a suitable site away from the water source. I carry a lightweight, one metre square by three millimetres thick foam mat. This mat is ideal to stand on when pouring water over yourself and washing all those parts that need a good going over. Your hair can be washed in the same manner. Use one of those lightweight absorption towels to dry yourself off. Both the towel and the mat will dry out in only a few minutes. Use water to dilute any soap-suds left on the ground.

It's important to keep your feet clean, dry and well aired to help prevent possible fungal complications such as tinea. If you are on an extended walk in bad weather it may be difficult to avoid prolonged periods of wet, cold feet. This may lead to cold-related injuries, an extreme form of which is called trench-foot. Dry your boots at every opportunity by removing the laces, pulling back the tongue, extracting the foot-bed and placing them in the sunshine. Once the boots are dry it will be necessary to apply a good waterproofing compound such as Nikwax or Sno-seal. Change into dry socks regularly. If you are prone to blisters or are using a new pair of boots it may be wise to tape up all potential rub points. Any blisters must be taken care of immediately. Lack of treatment may result in a particularly painful experience which in extreme cases will require the victim to be evacuated.

It's amazing how many walkers are careful to boil or filter all their drinking water but still brush their teeth in water taken directly from a potentially contaminated source. Just because you don't swallow your toothpaste it doesn't mean that bugs can't enter your system. Use boiled or filtered water whenever the purity of the water is in doubt. Brush your teeth well away from the water source and rinse the ground of any used toothpaste.

Cooking

Preparing food is always of concern to the health conscious. Wash your hands thoroughly and make sure that your cooking utensils are clean. Carefully check your ingredients for any sign that the product has gone stale or may be off. Canned food must not be leaking. Used cans are best carried out after having been washed, or burnt in the campfire and then flattened.

Washing dishes

Don't leave your cutlery, bowls and billies unwashed overnight or throughout the day.

Animals such as possums and dingos enjoy licking out dirty pots and are potential carriers of disease. All dishes should be washed immediately after use. Any food that is left over should be carried out or burnt or buried in the same manner as toilet waste. Wash your dishes well away from any water source. Most bushwalking parties put together a washing-up kit made up of a scouring pad, a Chux wipe, a small plastic bottle of biodegradable detergent and a clean tea towel. (A half-sized towel is lighter and does the job.) Avoid the use of paper towels; these are wasteful and have to be burnt or carried out once used. In some cases you will be able to avoid the use of soap when washing your pots; instead, use a scouring pad or even sand and finish off with a rinse in hot water. Over the years I have found that Teflon-coated billies are the easiest to wash and require only a wipe-out with a Chux.

Preventing infection

Even the smallest cuts and scratches will need to be treated with an antiseptic cream to reduce the possibility of infection. Make sure that a soft-tissue injury is correctly bandaged. An inner layer of gauze may be necessary. The dressing itself will prevent or limit infection, absorb the drainage, keep the skin adjacent to the wound dry, control bleeding and swelling, and protect the wound. An outer bandage will hold the dressing in place. Wash your hands carefully before applying any dressing. Insect bites and stings should be treated with an anti-itch cream to prevent scratching.

Huts

Huts are especially prone to hygiene problems and for that reason I try to avoid staying in them. Apart from rats, mice and possums, there are all sorts of other disease-carrying critters lurking in the shadows and waiting to join you in your sleeping-bag. The tell-tale sign of rodent droppings is a warning to keep your food secure. In most huts it will be necessary to hang food bags from the roof. Leaving food lying about the hut is not only unhygienic but will attract more rodents which will further compound this common problem.

A large number of people in a small area will guarantee that coughs, colds and flu are easily spread. I remember an incident where a dozen walkers from three separate parties arrived at Cleve Cote Hut on Mt Bogong. One individual didn't feel well and by morning eight other walkers had come down with the flu.

Cooking facilities in a hut can be especially dirty. Avoid using hut utensils. Wash any tables carefully and use your own chopping board. If the hut has tank water make sure it is filtered or at least boiled. Avoid using communal water buckets as it takes only one dirty bucket or an unwashed hand to contaminate the supply. Small amounts of waste food can be burnt (if the hut has a fireplace) while larger quantities should be buried well away from the hut or carried out. Do not throw food waste or packaging down the toilet. In short, a little respect for the environment will pay dividends. ■

Glen Tempess (see Contributors in *Wild* no 4) has been a Special Adviser to *Wild* since our second issue. He is a renowned raconteur, climber, cross-country skier and mountain photographer.



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THE CURSE OF THE CAMERA

Scenery or slide-fodder? By *Quentin Chester*

During the past 20 years there has been an astonishing growth in the popularity of outdoor photography. The images are everywhere. Framed prints adorn living-room walls. Coffee tables creak under the weight of glossy tomes. Each spring a veritable forest of trees is pulped to provide us with calendars and diaries containing portraits of forests and trees. It's not just hardened outdoor types who now treasure such images. These days wild rivers grace dentists' waiting rooms, and fish-and-chip shop walls are adorned with fat-splattered rain forests. This branch of photography is more than a booming industry; it's also changing the way Australians think about décor—and their ancient continent.

But there is another side to the boom. While the proliferation of such worthy images is commendable, it has also spawned a legion of imitators. Nowadays, it seems, everybody wants to be an outdoor photographer. To those of us with an aversion to cameras and the rignarole of photography this trend is unsettling. There was a time when my excursions into the bush entailed only token attempts to document the occasion on film. But lately I have come to feel guilty about sleeping through a photogenic sunrise or strolling idly by a picturesque waterfall. I, too, have fallen victim to the ubiquitous shutter bug.

My ambivalence towards cameras is partly based on an ignorance of elementary photographic principles. Over the years I guess that I have taken the odd thousand photos, yet concepts such as focal length and depth of field remain dimly understood. Fearful that my meagre talent would be suffocated by technical competence, I have persisted with an approach to photography I like to think of as sensibly naïve. Less charitable companions call it wantonly lackadaisical.

Part of my diffidence also stems from a history of being bush with camera bores, people for whom ownership of the latest Nikon is another excuse to preen and posture. A few years ago, on a trek in Nepal, the sanity of our group was endangered by one bloke's obsession with the contents of his camera bag. At every opportunity he would lay out a towel and in a tedious ritual arrange his bewildering array of lenses and filters. Usually by the time he was ready to take a

shot the mountain in question had become obliterated by cloud and the rest of us had moved on. During meal times he would regale us with his photographic conquests in the great mountain ranges of the world. After 17 days of this some of us were suggesting he might want to take a short walk into a deep crevasse.



Slide- (and ambulance-) fodder: 'Andrew Beveridge gear-testing his bivy bag off a Mt Loch, Victoria, cornice'. Cathy van der Zee and Tony Corke

Looking back at my own slides of that trip it is not hard to see why some people get carried away. Imposing mountain views give ample scope for images that flatter even the most mediocre photographer. However, someone else browsing through these holiday snaps might also assume that we had 30 days of cloudless skies, that all the locals had beaming smiles and that our group was one big happy family—including the drip with

the huge camera bag and a towel around his neck.

Like a politician, a camera can produce a very distorted view of the truth. The English mountaineer Doug Scott—himself no mean photographer—once admitted to being troubled by the way his memory of expeditions was being reduced to the slides that illustrated his lectures. A picture may be worth a thousand words but it still omits a lot of experience only words can describe. Having dragged oneself to the mountain top it's hard to resist the obligatory summit photo but few of these images give any idea of what it was really like to get there. Greg Mortimer, one of Australia's most ardent summiteers, has a history of dispensing with cameras—and not just to lighten his load.

In recent times I have come to regard photography as an evil necessity. I still don't understand much about the wizardry by which pressing a button can transfer the particulars of a selected view on to a skimpy plastic rectangle. Nor do I really trust the resulting pictures to reveal the essence of a moment, let alone adequately document an entire trip. And yet there is no doubt that it's good to have a record of where one has been, if only to help unleash other memories. It's also true that, if one is in the mood, the habit of looking at things photographically can be a useful discipline. It encourages an eye for detail and unexpected compositions. One also learns not to squander precious daylight.

However, photography can easily become a crippling obsession. To join a group of camera buffs can turn a relaxing walk into a frantic quest. No panorama, no humble flower in bloom, no arty reflection or silhouetted tree, no wind-sculpted sand-dune is allowed to pass unrecorded. After lunch, as you lie with your hat drawn down over your eyes, the only sound is the whirr of motor-drives and the clank of tripod legs. When the campsite is eventually reached the rest of the party scatter. While you're valiantly pitching the tent the others are jostling for vantage points from which to snap the sunset as they prepare to meet their Mecca through a Minolta.

When camera-crazy companions do deign to be sociable it's usually to debate the merits of neutral-density filters or to poke their lenses where they are not wanted. I have endured trips where no privacy has been left unin-

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vaded. Suddenly your peculiar eating habits and bleary-eyed awakenings are prey to the japara paparazzi. By the end of the trip you begin to feel like royalty, your personal life hopelessly compromised.

I've also come to resent photography's logistical demands. For years I got by with an Olympus XA 2, a natty little unit small enough to slip into my shirt pocket. It was there at the ready if something suddenly caught my eye. I didn't have to disgorge my pack to find lenses; nor did I have to worry about a couple of kilos of metal and glass pounding on my sternum. The XA was light, portable and yielded respectable results.

But not respectable enough, it seems. On recent travels I have been forced, partly by peer pressure, to adopt a full armoury of SLR gear. My pack sags under the weight of it all and having freighted all this apparatus into the wilds I feel obliged to put it to some use. Whereas I used to be frugal with film and shoot only when the available light and subject matter virtually guaranteed results, I'm now lured into attempting shots in which the only thing perfectly exposed is my ineptitude. Whole rolls of film come back with barely a single worthwhile picture.

Of course, in the right hands such paraphernalia can do magical things. It can make the commonplace seem sublime. Mere nature is elevated to the realms of high art—just in case you didn't think it was up there already. It's been my luck to act as caddy for a few accomplished photographers. What has been most impressive is not their technical mastery, nor even the intuitive sense of what might make a cracker photograph, but their sheer exuberance for the places they're in.

Looking at pictures neatly packaged in a diary it is easy to overlook the work that goes on behind the scenes. A single image may be the product of many hours of solitary toil. Battling difficult terrain and fickle light often takes a dedication to craft that verges on a sense of mission. Many of these image makers are driven by a desire to bring to light—quite literally—places that are little known or often ignored. They help us appreciate that wilderness not only encompasses majestic vistas but exquisite, bizarre details.

Yet, even some of the finest practitioners are not above tinkering to create a more seductive result. Filters are used to crank up the colours. Fallen leaves are carefully re-aligned to tidy up a still-life assemblage. Exposures are slowed to the point where a messy rush of water flows smooth and white like cream. Meanwhile, landscapes are typically embalmed in a kind of honeyed evening glow. These distortions are so overused that they veer towards the cliché. Nature becomes a gilded, static ideal. The kind of blinding glare and frantic weather one tends to meet in real life rarely makes it on to the serene surfaces of the calendars' pages.

One can forgive a little sugar coating if it means garnering a wider audience for wilder subjects. But these static, oh-so-pretty images do risk inviting a complacency that all is right with the world. At a subliminal level it is too easy to mistake beauty preserved in a shiny print for preservation of the real thing. While the best of the wilderness images speak for themselves, and make a direct appeal to the

emotions, there are perhaps times when it's necessary for these photos to have the kind of context which leaves no doubt about what's at stake.

For the reality is that much of the countryside so lovingly transcribed on to film remains imperilled, by development and assorted abuses. It was this atmosphere of siege that gave the images of the Franklin River, Daintree and Kakadu the political force that supplemented their aesthetic charms. The continuing challenge for photographers is to make pictures that work both as art and statement. No one wants to dress their walls with pictures of toxic streams or clear-felled forest, yet there is good reason to be wary of mass image-making that is merely ornamental.

Those of us who like to immerse ourselves in wild areas should be grateful for the efforts of the photographers whose art has helped save the places we cherish. In these fiercely visual times their pictorial testimony has been as telling as any street protest or strident pamphlet. Our attempts to imitate their results might be flattery, but maybe it's time to consider other ways of showing 'our gratitude. Perhaps, too, there are occasions to cast aside the temptation to convert everything we do into Canon fodder.

Photography offers a grand illusion of permanence, the apparent ability to capture a given moment forever. The idea of wilderness is one of a secure refuge from the headlong rush to turn natural areas into subdivisions and shopping malls. In an ever more transient world it's no surprise that we crave a little permanence for what we see in the bush and the snaps we bring back. However, in the end, just as a photo is at best only a surrogate for the real thing, genuine wilderness is a place of subtle and insistent change.

Perhaps every now and then it's just as well to leave the camera gear at home. A few years ago I more or less did just that. In fact, I took my camera but in a last-minute panic the film was left on the kitchen counter. As a result I spent the first morning of the walk cursing lost photo opportunities. However, as the day wore on I became resigned to my plight and began to enjoy the passing of the moment, the reassuring sense of transience you get in the natural world when you feel part of it all, instead of madly trying to control events through a viewfinder like some manic Hollywood director.

If I were the kind of person who regularly trawls through their photo collection I guess I might feel cheated that my film stayed in the kitchen. However, the truth is that my photos—mostly slides—linguish in a jumble of yellow boxes in the bottom drawer of my filing cabinet. Perhaps one day I'll catalogue them all. But for now I'm busy enjoying my own transience. And I'm thriving on the images in my mind's eye. ■

Quentin Chester

Quentin Chester (see Contributors in Wild no 3) writes regularly about going bush. He is the co-author of *The Outdoors Companion, The Kimberley—Horizons of Time* and, most recently, *Australia's Wild Islands*, which explores the diversity of 26 of Australia's islands from the tropics to the sub-Antarctic.



New South Wales's E L U S I V E P E A K S

*David Noble tracks down five
fancied fugitives*

WILD BUSHWALKING



In *Wild* no 57 Stephen Down introduced us to the concept of an elusive peak: infrequently climbed, difficult of approach and ascent, perhaps remote, often overlooked. Tasmania was found to have no shortage of such 'hard ticks'; now it is time to expose the shyest mountain summits of New South Wales.

MOTHER WOILA

The Woila country in Deua National Park contains some of the finest ridge walking to be found in NSW. This is best exemplified in the tortuous spine of the ridge that runs from Mt Dampier to the Scout Hat (see the cover of *Wild* no 56). The jewel in this ridge's crown is a side peak known as Mother Woila. This splendid peak is believed to have been first climbed by the party of 'Mosley Marsten and Semple' in 1964. 'Mosley' was Geoff Mosley, a past president of the

map. The ridge is covered in a frustrating lattice-work of fallen trees, probably the result of strong winds. Recent reports indicate that nearby places, such as the summit plateau of Mt Tabletop, exhibit the results of similar havoc.

The traditional way to visit Mother Woila is as part of a long weekend or Easter walk. The route involves a steep, loose climb out of Woila Creek followed by a traverse across the ridge by way of a steep spire of quartzite known as the Scout Hat. The route then follows the knife-edge ridge to a high camp on Mt Tabletop. From here the ridge can be followed northwards and Mother Woila visited as a side-trip. The peak is separated from the main ridge system by a narrow chasm. It is relatively straightforward to reach the bottom of the chasm from the north, but much harder to climb out. It is necessary to traverse carefully on the right (western) side of the peak until a steep

(Most of the names of this popular bushwalking area's features which have been long recognised by walkers unfortunately do not appear on modern topographic maps. The grid references from the *Badja* 1:25 000 sheet are: Mother Woila, 386100; Tabletop, 405089; the Scout Hat, 395072.)



Viewed from Bimlow Tablelands, the Broken Rock Plateau floats on a typical Blue Mountains sea of cloud. **Left**, bushwalkers take in the view from the summit of Mt Mistake. **Pages 32 and 33**, this photo helps to explain why we do it: the Broken Rock Plateau from Bimlow Tablelands. All photos David Noble

Canberra Bushwalking Club and a former director of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

The nearby country is not for the faint-hearted bushwalker. The relief is of the order of 1000 metres; consequently, climbing from the lowest valleys to the peaks is taxing. The ridges are often challenging in their own right. Technically, the easiest way to approach Mother Woila is along the fairly flat ridge which approaches from Dampier Trig. (A four-wheel-drive road visits this high trig.) However, the traverse from this road to the point on the ridge closest to Mother Woila is not as straightforward as it would appear from the

gully is reached, from which ascent to the elusive summit is merely a steep scramble.

There are direct routes to the peak from Woila Creek but these are much more difficult. The delightful Woila Creek itself is well worth including in any itinerary. The creek provides easy, fast walking free of undergrowth, and there are many excellent campsites along the open, grassy flats which flank it.

Mother Woila's summit log-book indicates that during the 1980s only two or three parties, on average, visited the peak each year. For such an interesting peak this indicates how challenging it is to reach.

MT CURROCKBILLY

When bushwalkers talk about the Budawang Ranges they usually mean that spectacular area centred on the Castle and Monolith Valley that forms part of Morton National Park. If you look carefully at a map you will see that Mt Budawang itself lies much further to the south. It is relatively uninteresting to the bushwalker as it has a road and fire-tower on its summit. However, between it and the most commonly visited northern part of the Budawangs lies the area's highest peak—Mt Currockbilly. Although infrequently visited, it is a worth-

while and challenging peak to climb. It can be seen in the bottom left-hand corner of the famous *Budawangs* sketch map.

The ridge that connects Mt Currockbilly to Mt Budawang is covered in a dense mat of bauera-type vegetation reminiscent of some of the botanical horrors that are to be found in South-

summit. These ridges are steep, demanding climbs that often involve loose scrambles.

As well as the steepness of the ridges, there is plenty of tough vegetation to be negotiated. Thick heath and sally scrub are to be found on the ridges and near the summit. The challenges presented by the vegetation and the steep nature of

ridge just as night was falling they were confounded to find themselves back on the summit of Mt Currockbilly. They had actually gone *up* the ridge they had planned to go *down*!



MT BROKEN ROCK

When bushwalkers return to Kanangra Walls late on a Sunday afternoon after a weekend in the Blue Mountains and turn to look at the country they have traversed, they are often tantalised by the glow of the dying sun on the massive sandstone ramparts of the Blue Breaks. These cliffs, which stretch along the horizon, are beyond the scope of an average weekend walk. The Blue Breaks is an area that was once accessible from the Burrigorang valley; it now has an air of great remoteness due to that valley's inundation to provide Sydney with drinking water.

The Blue Breaks is a section of the Kanangra wilderness that has often been overlooked by bushwalkers. Early this century, pioneers such as Myles Dunphy tended to concentrate on exploring the then more remote and unknown Kanangra-Kowmung area. Now that it is itself relatively remote, walkers should plan at least a week in the Blue Breaks to make the visit worth while.

There are many excellent places to explore in the Blue Breaks. A seldom visited but rewarding goal is the high plateau of Broken Rock Range. This range is strangely shaped. The main part of the plateau has a north-south orientation; the infrequent parties that set forth on to the range tend to traverse this section. Of great interest are two side plateaux that branch off towards the east and terminate in Shoobridge and Catt Heads. Consequently, when viewed from the nearby Bimlow Tableland, Broken Rock plateau takes on the appearance of a horseshoe. The whole length of this 'horseshoe' is raised well above the surrounding countryside. This is what gives Broken Rock its appeal—it stands by itself like a lofty castle. With very few exceptions the cliffline that girds the plateau is unbroken. Parties wanting to scale the plateau often carry, at the very least, a pack-hauling rope and must be prepared to scramble and find the route on steep terrain. Once on top, however, the rewards for so much effort are considerable. The clifflines that act as a barrier to the top also provide an elevated viewing platform—and the views are superb!

Rather than retrace their steps down the same route they ascended, most visiting parties traverse part of the plateau in order to attempt an alternative descent. This provides the opportunity of a high camp and a chance to enjoy the delights of sunrise and sunset. Water can be found on the plateau but should only be relied upon after recent



west Tasmania. Progress along this ridge is usually slow, while it is possible to travel easily through open farmlands a few kilometres to the west. However, to attempt Mt Currockbilly from the west in this way is unfair—a bit like taking the car to the summit of Hobart's Mt Wellington, or worse. To maintain your self-respect as a bushwalker, the only way to climb this elusive peak is from the east.

With the above point in mind, the obvious route to the summit lies along the lengthy Wirritin Ridge to the north-east. This ridge separates Belowra Creek from the Yabborra River. A full traverse of it is challenging—especially if fitted into a weekend trip which involves returning by another route. However, it is possible to climb on to this ridge at places such as Mt Roberts. More direct routes to the summit lie up the many ridges close to the peak, such as the Maurice and Colley Ridges. Indeed, the highest point of the Colley Ridge offers a better view than does Mt Currockbilly's

the quartzite ridges have caused more than one visitor to comment on the area's similarity to parts of South-west Tasmania. This similarity is carried even further with a 'high moor' campsite to be found in a hanging valley just north of the summit.

Of all the stories about Mt Currockbilly, one of the strangest involves a walk led by John Atkinson, who ran a series of walks to the mountain with the Kameruka Bushwalking Club during the 1970s, visiting all the major ridges. On one of these walks, after camping in the above-mentioned high camp near the summit, the party traversed the summit and descended a ridge to the Bimberamala River to the south-east—or so they thought. In fact, in trying to avoid scrub near the summit the party had strayed too far to the west and had taken the wrong ridge. Without realising their mistake, they climbed a ridge which they thought would take them to a forestry road on which their car was parked. But on reaching the top of this

rain. During dry periods it is advisable to carry water. (Wine-cask bladders are ideal.)

In the middle of the plateau lies a very narrow isthmus of rock that joins two sections of the plateau. Both north and south of the isthmus the plateau is several kilometres wide; here it is less than 100 metres wide. Abutting this narrow neck is the highest point of the plateau—Mt Broken Rock itself. This worthy peak is easily scaled.

I mentioned above that the best way to see the Blue Breaks is to include the area in an extended walk of a week or more. Circuits can be

visited by bushwalkers until the 1960s, it has retained the aura of a special and mysterious place. When I began bushwalking in the Wollangambe wilderness the only map available was the *Wallerawang* one-inch-to-the-mile sheet. The right half of this classic map showed a jumble of contorted contours quite unlike anything I had seen before. Also striking was the scarcity of named features. This was totally unlike the maps of the southern Blue Mountains with their plethora of Myles Dunphy names. Apart from the creeks, the few names that were given added to the attraction—the 'Crater', 'Lost Flat',

'Deep Pass', 'Natural Bridge', 'Valley of the Swamps' and, of course, the object of our attention, the very remote 'Mt Mistake'.

Mt Mistake is a long way from anywhere and it is hard to think of another summit in NSW that would be more difficult to reach in, say, a weekend trip from the closest road. On its eastern and northern sides Mt Mistake is cut off by the rugged Colo Gorge. South and west lie the continuous cliffs of the Nayook Creek Gorge. The only relatively gentle way of reaching it is by way of a labyrinth of ridges that stretch off to its north-west. This ridge system is accessible from an old track that runs to the basalt cap of Mt Cameron, an abandoned farm on the western edge of the wilderness. To traverse this series of ridges requires bush navigation skills of the highest order. The ridges themselves are indistinct, and almost continuous high, prickly scrub makes the lie of the land difficult to determine.

I first visited Mt Mistake, together with a group of friends from Sydney University Bushwalkers, as part of a six-day Mt Irvine-Newn's exploratory walk during 1975. Our route to the mountain lay up a steep, scrambling pass at the Colo River–Wollangambe Creek junction and then through thick and tangled scrub to a small peak called 'the Maiden'. From here the scrub relented slightly until we reached Mt Mistake. As with many places in the Wollangambe



The Wirritin Ridge from Mt Currockbilly, with the Castle beyond. **Right**, with tired satisfaction a walker surveys the depths from Koondah Tower.

made from Kanangra Walls or Katoomba, or the area can be included in a Mittagong–Katoomba walk. This way, Broken Rock can be visited in conjunction with traverses of some of the area's other tablelands or creeks. Another possibility for the fast, lightweight walker is a visit to Broken Rock as part of a long-weekend walk. It is possible to traverse the major section of the Broken Rock plateau from Kanangra and return in three days.



MT MISTAKE

The Wollangambe wilderness is the southernmost part of the northern Blue Mountains wilderness. The Wollangambe country is divided between two National Parks—the Blue Mountains National Park and the Wolllemi National Park. Rarely

New South Wales





wilderness, views are restricted due to the ubiquitous scrub. We were not disappointed, however, as we had reached a long-cherished goal. Our route off the peak lay among the above-mentioned maze of ridges. Luckily, we had several independent navigators who could cross-check each other, so we managed to stay on course. It was also necessary to employ a rigorous system of rotating the lead walker so that the unpleasant job of penetrating the unforgiving scrub was shared.

My subsequent trips to Mt Mistake have been along different, and perhaps easier, routes. With the passing of time (and with the help of bushfires) the scrub doesn't seem as bad as I remember. However, there are no straightforward

paths to the peak. It will always remain a difficult peak to bag.



THE KOONDAH TOWER

The KoonDAH Tower—the magic mountain! One day it doesn't exist, the next day it does. What is the origin of this mystery? When planning walks, or looking for new ideas for a walking destination, one of the obvious methods is to pore over maps. For members of the Sydney University Bushwalkers a common place to do this during a period of active exploration of the northern Blue Mountains in the late 1970s was in the beer garden of a nearby pub. Over a few schooners the difficulties of clifflines and

scrub tended to vanish and many classic walks were planned. However, a notable exception to this smooth planning occurred during a telephone discussion between two walkers, Chris Cosgrove and Ian Hickson. They were planning an extended walk through part of the northern Blue Mountains. Ian phoned Chris to point out an interesting feature that he had noticed on the top left-hand corner of the *Mellong* 1:50 000 sheet. Chris grabbed his copy of the map and tried in vain to find the feature Ian was talking about.

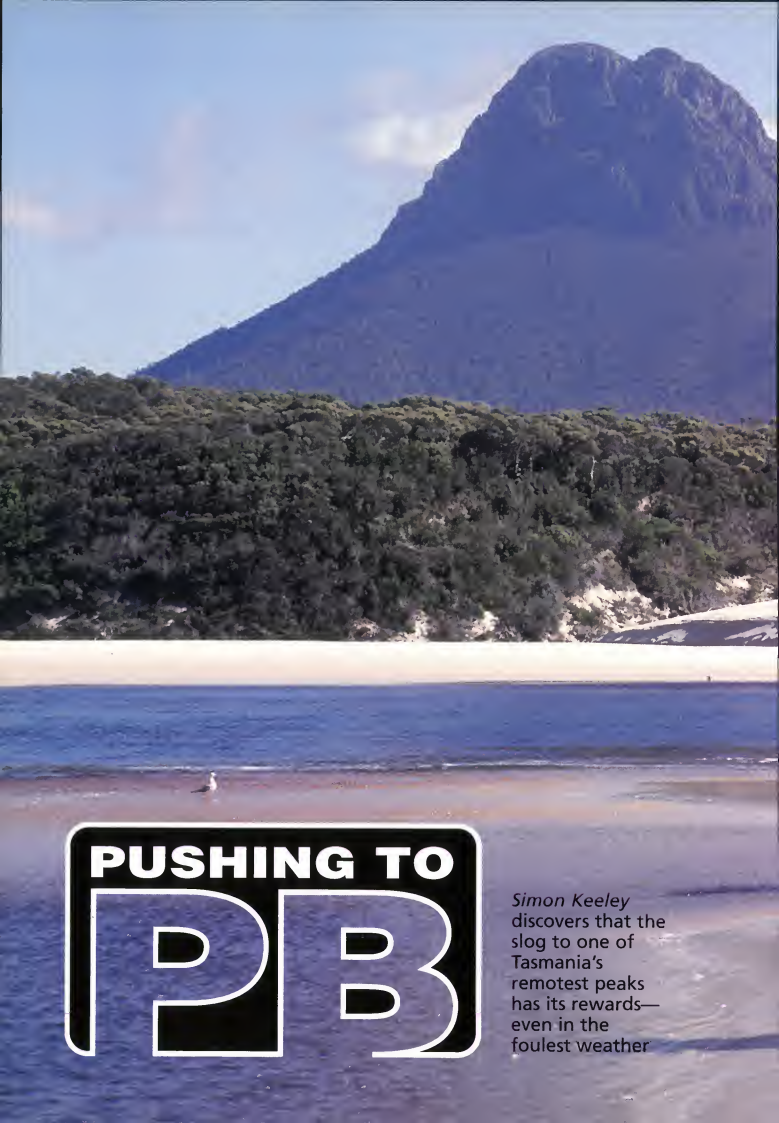
It was not until a few days later, when they met and compared their maps, that the source of the confusion was found. The early maps of the Colo and Wollangambe regions had been famous for their errors. Indeed, for a long time the only maps available of the Wollangambe wilderness showed that all the major creeks to the south of the Colo River joined a creek appropriately named 'Main Creek'. When aerial photography became available it was realised that this was wrong and that most of the creeks actually flowed into Wollangambe Creek. The maps of the northern part of the area were produced at a scale of 1:50 000 with the aid of aerial photography during the 1960s and 1970s by the Army's Royal Australian Signal Corps. What had led to the mystery of the missing peak was that Chris had been looking at a 1963 edition of the *Mellong* sheet while Ian had been looking at the 1974 edition. Amazingly, the early edition had left out a whole peak!

Such enigmatic features are well worth visiting and indeed we reached the mystery peak as part of a week-long walk soon after. We named the mystery peak the KoonDAH Tower as it lies adjacent to KoonDAH Creek. Chris Cosgrove, who wrote a submission proposing that the northern Blue Mountains become a National Park, stated:

One remarkable feature in the rocky section of KoonDAH Creek is the KoonDAH Tower, named by a recent party of bushwalkers who visited it. This is a pointed, cone-shaped, rocky tower which appears to be there without any reason. It is 120 metres high and has cliffs on its western and southern sides. It is completely separate from the ridges that it ought to be joined to according to the usual conventions regarding Blue Mountains ridge formation.

On a modern map the KoonDAH Tower is at spot height 425 (grid reference 670452) on the *Wirraba* 1:25 000 sheet. It is a steep but relatively straightforward scramble to climb it. Good views are obtained from the summit of this enigmatic peak. ■

David Noble (see Contributors in *Wild* no 3) has been a Special Advisor to *Wild* from our second issue. He is one of the best-known bushwalkers in New South Wales and an authority on walking and canyoning in the Blue Mountains as well as a much-publicised wilderness photographer.



PUSHING TO **PB**

*Simon Keeley
discovers that the
slog to one of
Tasmania's
remotest peaks—
even in the
foulest weather*

WILD BUSHWALKING



Hill One has an innocuous name. It looks pretty harmless, too. From Moonlight Flats—an exposed plateau on the range that rises from the southern Tasmanian coast (the range that culminates in the mighty Precipitous Bluff)—it is simply an olive-green mound ringed by a broken escarpment.

Rob and I set off towards it on a grey day one April. A gusty breeze rattled droplets of rain against the hoods of our parkas. The track, muddy and rocky by turns, soon became a swift stream punctuated by brown, peaty pools. Had we looked up occasionally from our plodding feet we might have noticed the brilliance of some green vegetation, the intricacy of the ground cover, or a dropped red flower. I squelched along rejoicing in the bleakness. But Rob was gloomy.

'How are you going?' I called out.

'Awful; bloody awful.'

'Why?'

'A sense of foreboding. I don't want to talk about it. Bad dreams.'

We trudged on through a break in the escarpment and up on to the lower slopes.

We had watched the clouds racing across the slopes as we approached. Now we felt the wind; merely strong at first but then, with each step on to higher and more exposed ground, increasingly powerful. Soon it became impossible to stand; we could only crouch on all fours, summon some energy, and then lurch wildly into the wind, pushing as if into an elasticised skin.

Straining, and conscious of an enormous roaring in our hoods and of the paramount need not to lose sight of one another in the almost zero visibility, we made it to the summit of Hill One and lay there, incredulous, fearful of being blown away and rolling out of control down the slope.

Communication was nearly impossible.

'Where to?' I yelled.

Rob pointed randomly.

'Out of the wind,' he screamed.

With that he staggered away. I caught up with him near a lip slightly off the summit, just in time to see the wind overbalance him and blow him over a rock. Surprised, he looked up, and was caught again. He rolled once more, a mass of flailing limbs.

I struggled towards him feeling somewhat anxious and disoriented. We held a short conference which consisted of each of us screaming: 'Out of the wind, let's get out of this bloody wind', and we were off down, half running, pushed from behind by huge gusts. Presently we came to a hollow and sat there miserably for an hour trying to come to terms with having to abandon the trip.

Nearly three years later we were back, this time in January. We took a taxi from Hobart's airport to the start of the walk at Ida Bay and just four hours after leaving our beds in Melbourne we were

climbing out of a quarry near the entrance to Exit Cave, one of Australia's longest.

A little way into the forest above the quarry is a sign forbidding dogs, cats and firearms. Someone had defaced it, scratching with a stone: 'A direction to the caves would be more useful than this weagree.' We stopped.

'What the hell's a weagree?' I said.

Rob looked at the sign.

'We...agree', he said.

'What?'

'We agree; that's what it says. Not weagree.'

'Oh. I thought for a moment that we'd discovered a Tasmanian colloquialism', I said. 'You know; as in "I wish this weagree of a pack wasn't so heavy"', or, say, "I hope that weagree of a wind doesn't blow up on Hill One again".'

We climbed a narrow track through the forest, past a giant beech, across a sodden button-grass shelf and finally up a steep slope thick with tea-tree, scoparia and pandanus. Arriving on the plateau and emerging out of this scrub was like coming up for air. Ahead of us was the formidable obstacle of Hill One. We plodded towards it along a boggy, scoparia-filled ditch and set up camp somewhere near Moonlight Creek. It started to rain.

The weather looked just as rotten the following morning as it had on that April day nearly three years before. The same misty rain, the same racing clouds, the same bleakness.

'How are you feeling?' I called out to Rob.

'Fine. Great', he said.

Well, that's certainly an improvement, I thought.

We started to climb Hill One. Easy walking, I noted—closely packed cushion plants, patches of pineapple grass, wind-stunted pandanus, all firm to the tread. Near the top a curious thing happened; the wind died away completely. The cloud lifted enough for us to see Mt La Perouse looming out of the valley to our left. Ragged clouds swirled around its flat summit and became entangled in the remarkable dragon's-back ridge formed by the Hippo and the Cockscorn.

'Amazing', said Rob. 'The mountain's let us come this far. It's even allowed us a view. What's in store for us later on, I wonder?'

'What's wrong with you?' I said. 'Normally I'm the one with all that mystical carry-on.'

We walked on over the hilltop and came to Hill Two, sidling among slippery scoparia branches, watching the way carefully, mindful of falling or turning an ankle. Ahead was Moores Bridge, a narrow plateau flanked by vegetated cliffs that forms the head of a valley spiked with bleached, dead trees. On the plateau itself are clusters of white rocks which from a distance look like

nesting albatrosses. Brooding in a gap between the conical Mt Wyllie and the lump of Mt Victoria Cross was our goal, Precipitous Bluff, its huge cliffs visible through partings in the cloud.

We sat to admire the view. Coming towards us was a solitary figure, striding quickly up the slope.

'Terrible weather', he gasped.

'Don't know about that', we replied.

'Looks pretty good to us.'

'No, I mean it's been terrible weather.

Hail, wind. Could hardly stand up. Couldn't get up La Perouse. Where are you headed?'

'PB.'

'You probably won't make it', he said. 'I've never met anyone who has.'

'Well, we'll see.'

'Nice, cheerful, optimistic fellow', we remarked to one another after he had left.

We stopped for lunch at Pigsty Ponds, wondering about the origin of such a name, then climbed the ridge adjacent to La Perouse, intending to go to the summit. When the cloud descended and it began to rain again we abandoned the idea and carried on to Maxwell Ridge—a veritable moonscape of lichen-encrusted, orange-brown rocks swathed in mist—following cairns and then another muddy track down a steep slope to a saddle.

The wind rose here, whipping at the clouds and breaking them up so that we could look across a wide valley to our right and see Precipitous Bluff again. It looked, if anything, further away and even more inaccessible than earlier that day. Ahead, a ridge stretched before us to Knife Mountain and, ultimately, to Pindars Peak, which we couldn't see. Swirling, lifting clouds clung to the leeward side of the ridge, steaming out of a deep valley. To the left a succession of ridges sloped away to the coast, dimly visible through rising mists.

We pushed on—through more scoparia, this time head-high—and came to Ooze Lake. It was pouring with rain.

Next morning I woke early, struggled out of my bag, found the radio we had brought along (so that we would not have to miss news of the Test match) and twiddled the dial in search of a weather forecast. This was awful; gale warnings, rain falling as snow in southern and central regions, no improvement for days. There was a Bushwalkers' Alert.

'There's a Bushwalkers' Alert', I said to Rob, who was also awake. He was looking at me, waiting for me pass on the news—the radio had no speaker and one channel of the earplugs had packed up.

'What are you talking about?' he said. 'Bushwalkers' Alert? I've never heard of such a thing.'

'Believe it or not, this is Tasmania', I said. 'In Victoria we have Sheep Weather Alerts; in Tasmania they have Bushwalkers' Alerts.'

'Oh. I suppose that means if we walk today our feet will go black and drop off.'

'Guess so.'

We stayed in bed. Rain and wind battered at the tent, keeping us inside. Essential chores were agony. We were gasping for a cup of tea. We were using a new stove for the first time and neither of us had managed to work out how to light it without first creating a wild, leaping flame. Cooking in the vestibule was out of the question.

'Give it a go', urged Rob. 'I'm absolutely parched.'

'You've got to be kidding', I replied. 'Do you want me to burn down the tent?'

'But it's wet.'

'Have I ever told you about the tent I saw explode in Queensland?'

'No.'

'Someone was cooking inside—at least, I think that's what he was doing. He must have upset the stove because suddenly, right there in the camping ground, there was a fireball and a man leaping out of the flames yelling 'Shit! My tent! Look at my bloody tent! Shit! What am I going to do!' I think of that every time I have to cook in a vestibule.'

The day passed with agonising slowness. We read, listened to the cricket (taking turns with the one earplug), dozed and speculated about the walk ahead. Every so often a thinner patch of cloud would pass overhead, brightening the tent and warming it up a degree or two. At these times we became quite optimistic.

'It's clearing up', one of us would say, and poke a head through the door.

'Good. We'll be off tomorrow, then.'

But the following day was no better—there was still a 'Bushwalkers' Alert'. Driven by boredom we set off to 'recce' the way ahead and see whether it might be possible to continue past Pindars Peak.

Once we reached the ridgetop the wind hammered into my parka hood. Clouds raced across the valley from the direction of PB and billowed around the rocky summit of Pindars Peak, now tantalisingly near. This wild and dramatic weather and landscape prompted a feeling of wild exhilaration.

'Let's go', I yelled to Rob.

'Down?'

'No. Onwards.'

'In this?'

'Why not?'

'We won't get up Pindars.'

'You never know.'

Back at the tent the weather worsened considerably. Baggy dark clouds and fierce squalls turning to snow-showers swooped over the

surrounding ridgetops and brought a bone-chilling wind. Instead of packing up, we crawled back into the tent. In New South Wales a fire-storm was destroying vast areas of the eastern seaboard. To us, being battered by this fierce, stormy weather, these fires seemed scarcely credible.

Reading the guidebook later that day, we discovered that some parties had taken one-and-a-half days to scrub-bash along the side of New River Lagoon at the base of PB. It is normally possible to wade through the lagoon but after flooding rains it can apparently be impassable.

'If that happens we could be out for 12 or 13 days', said Rob.

'Hmm. Better think about rationing the food. We've only got about nine or ten days' worth.'

'Rationing! You're joking, surely.'

That night we did without dinner.

The next day the weather improved. The wind dropped slightly, the squalls brought in rain as opposed to pellet-like hail and snow, and the clouds rose high enough for us occasionally to see the summits of Pindars

Peak and Mt Wyllie and of PB. Shouldering our packs we walked up the ridge which climbs towards Pindars Peak. The weather driving into my parka hood brought on a bludgeoned, dreamlike daze rather than the exhilaration of the previous day.

The track followed the ridgetop and passed close to the summit of Pindars Peak. We scrambled up to it through boulders and stood joyfully in the greyness, unable to see a thing. The clouds, of course, had come down just enough to obscure the view.

But the weather held. For a while we made good time as we traversed the mountain and then began to descend. With each metre of altitude lost the scrub became higher and thicker so that before long we were pushing through soaking tea-tree, wading in ankle-deep ooze and having our fingers sliced by razor-sharp pandanus leaves.

After passing a saddle studded with gale-lashed vegetation the going became tougher. Or were our bodies simply complaining about having done without dinner the previous evening?

'This is hell', panted Rob as he struggled through the scrub to a



Approaching Precipitous Bluff in conditions such as those pictured is a daunting prospect. **Pages 38 and 39**, PB seems to hang over Prion Beach. All photos Simon Keeley



break and a snack. The fellow offered us some scroggin. 'Are you sure?'

'Of course. We pick up new supplies at Melaleuca in three or four days. Go for it.' 'We can't return the favour, I'm afraid. We're short of food. We're rationed to just five biscuits a day, a quarter of a block of cheese, a Power Bar...you know.' 'What's a Power Bar?'

'A kind of candy-bar food supplement. One of the bushwalking shops gave us a stack of them. They're not bad.'

We headed off together along the moraine towards PB, climbing over massive, slippery boulders and floundering through head-high scrub. Two hours later we were switchbacking down to a low saddle, following a frustrating maze of pads that had us walking 100 metres to advance 20. At the saddle at last, there was no obvious spot for lunch and it had begun to rain again. The woman was becoming visibly irritated.

'What edition of "Chapman" have you got?' she asked us.

'I don't know,' said Rob.

The woman looked at him as if he were a recalcitrant little boy.

'You look it up in the front', she said. 'Inside the front cover.'

'Yes, I know,' said Rob. 'It's just that we tore the relevant pages out and only brought those.'

'What?' said the woman. She looked at us scornfully. 'What have you got in those packs anyway? You've got no food. You've got no books. They can't weigh much.'

I thought: You need your lunch.

Rob and I dawdled over ours and allowed the couple to get a good start on the climb up PB, waiting until we saw them appear above the forested, lower slopes and disappear again into a gully beyond a waterfall before we set off.

This was an exhilarating climb. Halfway up, beside the waterfall, we paused to look back. A squall was sweeping through the low saddle towards the Salisbury valley; in the distance was Pindars Peak—a grand, rocky pyramid; nearer, patches of sunshine advanced over the Mt Wyly plateau to Mt Victoria Cross, where smoky grey clouds hung suspended.

Within an hour we came to the head of a valley on PB's immense top. We made straight for the edge to peer over. A blanket of dark grey cloud lay above the landscape before us but was high enough to allow us to see line upon line of mountain ranges receding to the west, hazy and blue, silhouetted in the yellow rays of the invisible sun. Far below lay New River Lagoon looking like a silvery-grey representation of the map. The New River itself snaked away through the forested plain at the

hilltop. 'I don't know what's wrong with me. Is it age, do you think?' Rob is 34.

As we grizzled, a mass of cloud came rolling along the ridge towards us, bringing more rain. When it lifted the great, black cliffs of Precipitous Bluff suddenly seemed very close. From here they looked impenetrable and exciting. On the other hand, the spot where we intended to camp looked a very long way off indeed. We trudged up sodden slopes, up and up, almost to the top of the peak we were ascending, and in a freezing wind came at last to our campsite. We pitched the tent on a cliff-edge and, abandoning our ration plans, cooked a substantial dinner in the hail.

Once again we found ourselves tent-bound. We sat hunched (to stretch out meant that feet became cold), without food or drink (we still hadn't learned how to control the flame on the stove; besides, going without left more for another day), and uncomfortable. Rob's bulk beside me edged ever further on to my side of the tent. We became fanatical about the need to keep the inside of the tent dry and constantly mopped at a little pool that kept forming in the corner.

In the short-lived breaks in the gloomy weather we stuck our heads outside and looked over the cliff at the strip of sand and the white slash of breakers far below.

'Wonderful view to Prion Beach, Rob. You should have a look. Trouble is, I hate it.'

'Why's that?'

'The bloody thing's in sunshine.'

In the afternoon the wind changed from the north to the south-west. It burst up from the coast and rammed into the tent, shaking it alarmingly as though it had been caught in the jaws of a violent

animal and was being tossed from side to side. Inside I was reading Conrad:

A marvellous stillness pervaded the world, and the stars, together with the serenity of their rays, seemed to shed upon the earth the assurance of everlasting security.

'Listen to this, Rob.' I read the passage to him.

'Pah!' he retorted.

The following day brought only a marginal improvement in the weather. We packed up anyway and sat in the drizzle eating breakfast—a measly 30 gram packet of instant porridge and a cup of tea.

'Little Oscar has more for breakfast than this', said Rob gloomily. (Oscar is Rob's two-year-old son.)

'Great', I said. 'Thanks for telling me that.'

We headed off into the mist, dropped to a saddle, climbed to a small hilltop, then dropped again to a wider valley where the track disappeared among tea-tree and pink and white sphagnum. Here, we blundered about—lost—until we came upon two others, a couple whom we had met briefly on the plateau above. They, too, were lost.

'Thank God', I heard the woman say as they materialised out of the mist. 'Here are the other two.'

The four of us conferred briefly, neither party quite wishing to admit to being uncertain of the way, and resumed our blundering about, each heading randomly into the scrub. By the time Rob and I found the way the other two had disappeared out of earshot. Presumably they, too, had worked it out.

We climbed to a saddle on the scrubby ridge that leads to the base of PB where we came upon the couple taking a

northern end of the lagoon, leading the eye to that point where the monarch of mountains, Federation Peak, should have been, but where we couldn't make it out. When the breeze stilled momentarily I fancied that we could hear the breakers crashing into distant Prion Beach.

Rob and I turned to one another and smiled. We were not quite at the top, but we were *here*.

We went to the summit, of course, but on the following morning when the weather had closed in again.

'Well, at least we got *here*', I said.

Had we taken the time, we might have paused to watch a solitary bird hopping about in a bush, or to wonder about the age of a knobble-trunked beech, or simply to take in the magnificent greenness of such an ancient forest, with its myrtles, King Billy pines, sassafras, and intricate mosses. Instead, we just wanted to get down, to get the struggle over with.

As we descended it became warmer and we had to stop to remove some clothing. Here, there were shards of limestone poking out of the ground and sink-holes full of ferns. We would come

The woman looked aghast.

At mid-morning we waded into the lagoon and set off for Prion Beach. Usually—according to the guidebook—ankle- to knee-deep, today the lagoon was knee- to crotch-deep. It was also dark and black, making it impossible to see submerged tree branches or smooth, rounded stones. Nevertheless, we made reasonable progress and without overbalancing. Four or five times it was necessary to head into the forest to search for a way across creeks that flowed into the lagoon yet were impossible to negotiate once they merged with the lagoon's waters.

After seven hours we came to the South Coast Track, marked by a tied-up boat which had been left to enable walkers on this track to cross the lagoon. Rob and I offered to come across with the couple so that we could row the boat back, thus leaving a boat on both sides of the lagoon. Rob and I intended to head east to Cockle Creek; the others were heading west.

'Fantastic', said the fellow. 'Thanks.'

We clambered into the boat and for ten glorious minutes Rob and I sat staring across the lagoon and its sandy edges up at Precipitous Bluff and Pindars Peak while the pair rowed us across. What a contrast to the preceding days! The sun shone, a slight, refreshing breeze blew, the oars splashed in the water, and the boat zigzagged along, steered by the two inexperienced rowers. I wished we would never reach the other side.

It took two more long days for Rob and me to get to Cockle Creek. On the South Coast Track from Prion Beach the walking is pleasant and easy, through forest, over a couple of button-grass plains and along the beaches of Surprise, Shoemaker and South Cape Bays. The sun shone on both days. Apart from the leech-infested bogs on the South Cape Range—deep, slimy, chocolate-coloured hectares of ooze that can suck in a wayward leg up to the thigh—it was perfect walking.

While the bogs are a problem, so too were the duck-boards as we approached Cockle Creek. These enabled us to stride out and to walk with a steady, clomping gait. For the past 11 days we had been clambering, hopping, jumping and side-stepping, mostly on soft surfaces. The hard duck-boards tortured our feet; the striding played havoc with our backs. This was cruel punishment. By the time we arrived at Cockle Creek we were both hobbling. We tottered through the camping ground in search of a site for the tent.

'Hey! Mate!'

Someone seated in front of a caravan was calling out to Rob, who was barely moving.

'Yer gonna make it, are yer?' ■

Simon Kealey has walked extensively in Australia and overseas. He is a keen writer and photographer and is a former winner of The Age travel writing competition.



Heaven and hell; two sides of the ridge to Pindars Peak.

'You mean, the mountain let us get *here*', said Rob.

'True. I guess it was too much to hope to get a view as well.'

'Never mind. At least it will be sunny when we get to the coast—to judge from what we saw the other day, anyway.'

'Don't count on it', I said.

We set off in the rain, down a nearly vertical, rocky gully that gradually became scrubrier. The guidebook promised an 'impressive amphitheatre of cliffs' towering above, but in this mist all we could discern was a brooding, dark presence. We sidled through an apparently lifeless forest; two or three times steep climbs made the efforts expended in descent seem wasted. In small, stony clearings water splashed violently down on us from the cliffs. Once I heard the 'cheep cheep' of a small bird.

Several hours of this led us to the top of the spur that descends to the lagoon. We began sliding, stumbling and scrambling through a tangle of tree roots and fallen branches, slipping and sliding frequently on smooth, black mud, all the time mindful that at any moment one of the sticks waving about in front of our faces might poke out an eye or a branch catch us unawares and send us flying.

to a flat part of the forest, think 'Good, nearly down', then catch a glimpse of the lagoon, seemingly no nearer than it had appeared ten or fifteen minutes earlier.

Reaching a creek we knew at last that we were down. We crossed, carried on through the forest, and came to the creek again. Four or five times this happened; each crossing required a thigh-deep wade. Would this never end? It did, of course. In the early evening we came to a tent—the couple from PB. They were inside, cooking.

'Enjoy that, did you?' said the fellow.

Both parties packed at a leisurely pace the following morning. The couple were thinking ahead to Melaleuca, where they would arrive in three days' time.

'We've got a food-drop there', said the woman. 'Full of luxuries.'

'Yeah? Like what?'

'A bottle of port, a chocolate cake, you know the sort of thing', said the fellow.

'Dry toilet paper', added the woman.

'Dry toilet paper, eh? Some toilet paper would do for us.'

She gave me her school-marm look.

'Are you out of toilet paper, too?'

'Not quite. We'll be frugal. Anyway, if we do run out there are ways and means. Once Rob and I set out for a ten-day hike and discovered on the second day that we had forgotten to take any toilet paper at all.'

ALL CLEAR

Victoria's finest alpine circuit? By *Glenn van der Knijff*



WILD BUSHWALKING



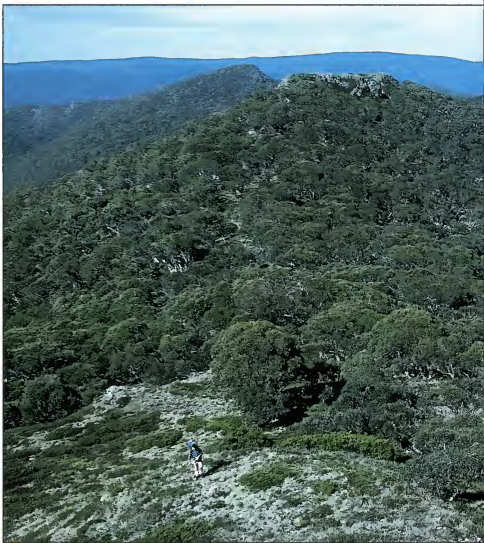
To climb the wild and lonely peaks of the Mt McDonald/Mt Clear area in the Victorian Alps has been an obsession of mine since I first read their names and saw their photographs in two familiar and well-thumbed books of the mid-1970s. In fact, I would go so far as to blame these two books for kindling my interest in bushwalking, cross-country skiing and the Australian Alps. The books to which I refer, Dick Johnson's *The Alps at the Crossroads* and the first edition of John Siseman's *The Alpine Walking Track*, are familiar to many. Eighteen years later my dreams had not faded one iota and I considered that it was high time I visited these peaks and in so doing transform my childhood dreams into lasting memories.

The route from the Jamieson River up to Mt McDonald and along the range, over the high peaks of Mt Clear and King Billy No 1 to the Bluff, and back to the Jamieson River deserves to be considered one of Victoria's premier mountain walks. This was the route I chose, with the aim of bagging all the summits in between.

Unfortunately, as Steve and I had only three days available to us, our initial plans of walking the entire circuit in one trip had to be altered. Instead, we agreed to walk a shortened version of the route, from Upper Jamieson Hut up to Mt McDonald and across to Mt Clear, then descend directly from Mt Clear to the Jamieson River. I'd have to return at a later date to fulfil my desire to complete the 'circuit'.

The rain eased as we pulled the car over next to a clearing at the junction of Brocks Road and Low Saddle Road. As we prepared for the walk we were startled to see a dog trot out of the scrub flanking the Jamieson River. He was obviously in bad need of company, although we weren't. He followed us persistently as we strode up the increasingly overgrown Low Saddle Road. After trying to make him turn back for about an hour we admitted defeat, succumbed to his friendly overtures, and in the interest of environmental protection let him tag along with us.

About two kilometres from the Jamieson River we took to an overgrown vehicle track that leads to the spur that climbs directly to the summit of Mt McDonald. However, the track on the spur soon peters out and we were left floundering in the scrub, which was wet from a recent downpour. Although the route is indicated with occasional markers, it certainly isn't obvious and we had to resort to scrub-bashing. We repeatedly walked into cobwebs and after ridding myself of my tenth leech I swore that I'd never walk this route again. It's funny how frustration can quickly turn to delight for, after descending into a saddle, the spur steepens and improves into one of the most attractive I've ever climbed—even better than the King Spur



The view south from King Billy No 1 over King Billy No 2. Pages 44 and 45, Mt Clear, left, Square Top and High Cone from the Bluff. All photos Glenn van der Knijff

on Mt Koonika. No scrub; just a faint pad interrupted only by an occasional steep, rocky bluff that provided much excitement—particularly for the dog which languished and whined at the most difficult sections where we had to hoist it aloft. Eventually the grade eased, the forest opened up around us and, after we negotiated a few rocky overhangs, the rocky summit was revealed to us.

Here we were greeted by a gusty southerly wind and scudding mist. Unfortunately the wonderful views that can be enjoyed from this spot were obliterated by the cloud. It was quite cold for the height of summer (my thermometer read 10°C) so we decided to join the route of the Alpine Walking Track and push on. We headed east but due to the thick fog and our haste to keep moving, we found ourselves following a prominent rocky ridge into a scrubby gully. On realising our error we retraced our steps to the main ridge and followed the correct route, crossing continuously from one side of the narrow ridgeline to the other to avoid the slow,

scramble sections. We decided to camp at the first possible campsite, about 400 metres east of the top. While not entirely flat it was nice and grassy, sheltered from the southerly wind and held the promise of good views should the clouds lift. Importantly, we were able to find water in the form of a spring a little way down the gully south of the ridge on which our tents were perched.

We were soaked by the time we'd returned from the spring so we wasted no time in changing into dry clothes and preparing our meal; the dog had to make do with survival rations of pita bread and water. Moments before sunset the mist lifted and we were treated to some enticing views of the Jamieson River valley to the north. The upper slopes of the Bluff remained tantalisingly covered in cloud.

That night I slept uneasily. Before bedding down we made a crude 'lean-to' with my spare ground sheet by the dwindling coals of our campfire. Under this we coaxed the dog, intending for him to sleep there for the night, keeping watch over us just as a shepherd watches his sheep. This dog, I soon discovered, had been alone long enough—not long after I lay down to sleep I felt his shivering body cuddle beside mine on



the outside of the tent. A cold breeze blew throughout the night and as he hadn't moved an inch by morning my first thought was to tentatively prod the curled-up body to see if it had survived the night. To my great relief his eyes blinked, his tail wagged and he excitedly sat up waiting for his adventure to continue.

As we departed in the morning the sun shone for the first time and lifted our hopes for a fine day. The track, which runs east along the summit ridge, is marked by occasional rock-cairns. I can vividly recall the wild flowers that grow in profusion along this section. There were grass trigger-plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*), silver daisies (*Celmisia asteliifolia*), common billy-buttons (*Craspedia glauca*) and snow aciphyll (*Aciphylla glacialis*). The aroma these plants gave off was particularly pleasant. After a few kilometres the faint track improves into an old, overgrown vehicle track which then joins a well-used vehicle track that emerges from the deep valley to the south. As the 'road' meandered east it provided easy walking for a few kilometres through an extremely attractive stand of snow gums. We left the road where it swings to the north and disappears over the edge of a sharp drop. Bearing south, we attained the Knobs after a short but extremely steep climb,

drifting cloud again obscuring any views of the surrounding mountains. Mist engulfed us as we approached the saddle between the Knobs and High Cone but on reaching the latter it had thinned enough to enable us to feel the sun's heat. Conditions then became extremely glary and quite hot; the thin, white cloud producing an effect similar to that of a well-constructed greenhouse. We rested here for lunch and discarded much of our clothing—a decision we later regretted after becoming painfully aware of our sunburn.

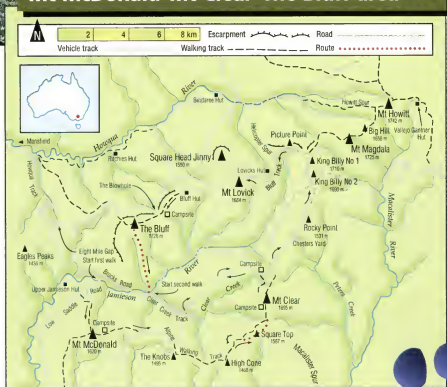
The walk between High Cone and Mt Clear is one that I'll long remember for the beauty of the views and the ever-changing forest environment. A short, sharp descent from High Cone leads into a grassy plain the size of a football field. Scattered trees add a manicured, park-like quality to the scene. As we ascended towards Square Top's substantial summit the track became surprisingly faint in places; so much so that we had to remind ourselves that we were actually following the popular Alpine Walking Track.

‘We repeatedly walked into cobwebs and after ridding myself of my tenth leech I swore that I’d never walk this route again.’

At the base of Square Top the main track swings to the north-east and sidles the open northern slopes well below the top of the peak. We decided to follow the ridgeline over the top; hopefully, a more exciting option. There is no track and in bad weather traversing this section would be a test of navigation but, as the sun was now shining brightly, our stroll through the snow gums was easy and an open, grassy slope showed us the way to the prominent saddle immediately south of Mt Clear.

Approaching Mt Clear the dog, which had been right on our heels all day, leapt forward without warning and proceeded to chase a cow that had been grazing behind a stand of trees near the summit. Before long he lost interest in the chase and returned to our heels, allowing the herd to escape to the relative quiet of the northern summit. Although the summit appears flat and

Mt McDonald–Mt Clear–The Bluff area



smooth from afar it is, in fact, quite rocky—a feature of many of the ‘flat-topped’ summits in the area. We found the only soft, grassy campsites to be among a stunted cluster of snow gums on the western rim of the summit plateau, barely 50 metres from the summit cairn. Steve, who had camped here a couple of years earlier, recalled that water was available down a gully to the east. An hour after setting off, water containers in hand, we returned from the ‘soak’, which had turned out to be 200 vertical metres down the steep hillside. My only solace after the water-scamble was the knowledge that this gully would provide a superb Telemark ski run should I manage to return during the winter months.

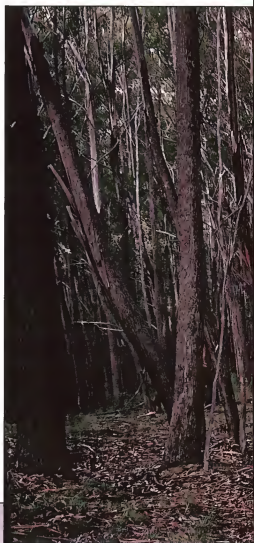
We awoke the next day to a perfectly clear morning and were soon on our way. We shortly passed the slightly lower northern summit before plunging very steeply off the northern face of the mountain. Here we encountered a four-wheel-drive track and followed it west. Before long we were wandering aimlessly along a most delightful undulating ridge, the only drawback of the warm weather being that we were now irritated by swarms of flies. All too soon the track veered away from the ridge and descended towards Clear Creek. A few hundred metres above the creek we decided to take a short-cut along an old vehicle track. A final battle with long grass and scrub brought us to a log crossing on Clear Creek. Twenty metres beyond the creek we reached Clear Creek Track and our way home. We’d stashed our bicycles among the scrub near the Brocks Road–Clear Creek Track junction three days earlier to facilitate a speedy return to the flesh-pots of Melbourne for Christmas Eve celebrations.

The five kilometre ride down the road to my car was an enjoyable—and unusual—way to finish a walk. However, the dog might not have agreed. After a speedy dash behind our bikes he took a refreshing plunge into the Jamieson River, something we also enjoyed before beginning the long drive home. After considerable effort, we managed to entice the dog into the car and he curled up on the mat we’d placed among our packs and bikes. After some initial squirming, there he lay comfortably and quietly until we reluctantly released him into the hands of the Mansfield police.

Four months later I returned to the Brocks Road–Clear Creek Track junction. This time it was late April; this time it was much cooler, and this time I had different walking companions—Tim and

Michael. We parked the vehicle and strode up Clear Creek Track. We followed this for a few kilometres before taking to the track that heads up the prominent spur leading to Mt Clear. After a short time we found ourselves ascending the same track that Steve and I had descended at the end of my previous walk. A few hours later we ‘topped out’ on the ridge. As we followed this lonely mountain road, Mt Clear beckoned only a few kilometres beyond. We camped near the base of the mountain, from where the major ridge we had been following begins its climb to the northern summit of Mt Clear. We had no dog for company this time, but Tim’s ‘home brew’ was exceptional and more than made up for the absence of our faithful canine companion.

It was a pity to have to break camp in the morning and leave such a fine campsite. We followed the vehicle track east to where it joins the Great Dividing Range which it then follows for some time. The scene as we passed Chesters Yards reminded me very much of a scaled-down version of the area surrounding Macalister Springs, that oft-visited campsite some distance further along the range. While we were in forest for much of the time, an occasional break between the trees afforded enticing glimpses of the wonderful high peaks which abound in this region, including Mts Clear, Magdala and Howitt, and of



High on the steep spur to Mt McDonald from the upper Jamieson River. **Top**, descending from the Bluff to the upper Jamieson River.

the Bluff (where we hoped to be the following day) which dominated the scene. Passing a series of bogs which have been heavily eroded by the misuse of motor vehicles, we realised that we

were fast approaching one of the more popular areas in the Victorian Alps.

We paused at a major cross-road before taking to the bush and climbing King Billy No 2. Scattered patches of snow added an air of winter to the walk. In order to cover as much distance in daylight as possible we hurriedly crossed over to King Billy No 1, one kilometre



away. The walk over the 'King Billies' is quite interesting and I would urge anyone who plans a walk in this area not to follow the easy option of the vehicle track but instead clamber directly over these peaks—a faint track shows the way.

Once past King Billy No 1 we joined Bluff Track briefly before heading for the bush again as we crossed Picture Point. After rejoining Bluff Track further west, we trekked on to Lovicks Hut where our stomachs told us it was lunch-time.

Beyond the hut the track had been recently upgraded and, unfortunately, the walk between Lovicks Hut and Bluff Hut seemed to be as much a wilderness walk as is a stroll through Fitzroy Gardens. Only the splendid scenery drew our attention away from the painful road-bash.

Once past Bluff Hut we took to the walking track and again found ourselves in relatively undisturbed 'wilderness'. A chill wind blew as we sidled below the cliff-tops and approached the Blowhole, a prominent gap in the cliffs a kilometre or so east of the Bluff.

Nearing the Blowhole we spied an inviting stand of snow gums on our left growing from what appeared to be a small, flat shelf just below the ridgeline.

This was obviously a suitable area to camp but we were unsure as to how far we'd have to bash down the gully to find water. To our surprise, it was only about 100 metres. Thankfully, a long day's walk was rewarded with a near-perfect campsite. We spent a relaxing evening enjoying a leisurely tea and took in the sunset from the top of the nearby cliffs.

The next day's walk looked as though it would be interesting, at least from what could be judged from our maps. We'd planned to climb the Bluff, then veer south-east and follow a long spur directly to its origin at the junction of Clear Creek and the Jamieson River. All indications were that the ridge would be scrubby, but just how difficult the route would be we did not know.

Overnight rain caused me to endure a restless night worrying about the difficulties that might await us. Nervous about the day ahead, I was up early and set about lighting a campfire to entice the others from their cocoons. Without warning, the temperature plummeted and light snowflakes began to drift lazily to earth as a cloud momentarily blotted out the sun. Before long, with our remaining food stuffed into the lowest compartments of our stomachs, we were striding up the Bluff, the wonderful

scenery compensating easily for the cold wind that tugged at our jackets. The Bluff is one of Victoria's most impressive peaks and from the north it looks almost insurmountable, but the summit was no more than a doddle from our campsite. After the obligatory 'summit' photographs were taken we headed through the damp heath on the mountain's southern slopes to find the spur. The spur is not obvious from the top but it becomes more prominent at a small clearing among the snow gums about 100 metres below the summit. On reaching this point I encountered another group of walkers camping there. By the time Tim and Michael had arrived I was eager to continue down the spur, and into the 'great unknown'.

Reflecting on previous walks it is clear to me that walking trackless country gives you a most satisfying feeling of discovery and exploration that comes from not knowing 'what's round the bend'. This is arguably the most enjoyable walking of all.

With these thoughts in my head, I strode from the clearing and into the forest. Within minutes, however, I was startled to find a faint pad which appeared to follow the spur. While not entirely obvious, it soon became apparent that this 'track' would take us all the way along the spur—possibly right to our vehicle! Walking down the spur itself was a sheer delight—quite rocky in the higher parts and scrub-free lower down among the tall alpine ash forest that, unlike its less fortunate relatives in the surrounding valleys, has thankfully not been logged.

As we approached the valley the sound of rushing water echoed from the hills around us. Not far from the Jamieson River the track becomes difficult to follow and we lost it a number of times in the scrub that becomes progressively thicker down the spur. On reaching the river flats after an extremely steep section we finally lost the track altogether and soon found ourselves floundering in almost impenetrable scrub only metres from the river. After a short battle we extricated ourselves from the tangle of saplings and emerged into the river. Within minutes we had made it on to Brocks Road and had walked the remaining 100 metres to the start of our jaunt.

As I walked those final few strides I remembered my first visit to this area some 18 years earlier through the pages of those books. Everything then had appeared so simple and uncomplicated, comprising only black-and-white images and a vivid imagination. Now, however, I at last had hands-on experience in these delectable mountains, as well as the Kodachrome to show for it. I was satisfied. ■

Glenn van der Knijff is a keen bushwalker, cross-country skier and alpine historian. A qualified cartographer, he worked for Victorian map and guidebook publisher Algonia Publications before joining the staff at Wild in 1988.



Karijini

G O R G E S

Western Australia's
unsung wonders,
by David Wagland



WILD BUSHWALKING

Just south of the former asbestos mining town of Wittenoom in north-west Western Australia is an undulating landscape of red rubble mountains, collapsed cliff faces and plateaux of golden spinifex and white 'snappy gums'. The vegetation stands defiant in this arid and harsh part of the world, where summer temperatures rise well into the 40s. The gorges in Karijini National Park seem to start from nowhere, initially as dry watercourses, growing to become crimson-coloured rifts up to 100 metres deep, often containing oases of long, shaded pools surrounded by river gums and paperbarks. The gorges finally cut their way out through a wall of mighty escarpments to the north, shedding their precious water on to the vast Fortescue River plains.

The atmosphere of Karijini has been a well-kept secret for over 20 000 years, since the time when it is thought Aboriginal occupation of the area commenced. The traditional owners call the Hamersley Range 'Karijini'. It is part of the Pilbara region—a place generally associated with huge iron-ore mines—and lies just north of the Tropic of Capricorn. Karijini National Park is WA's second largest park and now covers 627 445 hectares.

Within the northern portion of Karijini is a concentrated selection of gorges that attracts both the tourist and bushwalker. The upper reaches of Wittenoom Gorge offer the most challenging opportunities for bushwalking and canyoning through Joffre, Hancock, Weano and Knox Gorges. Even though each of these canyons is generally undertaken as a day trip, they all have demanding moments and can contain extremely cold water in the deep, shaded sections, particularly during winter.

Joffre

G O R G E

Joffre Gorge is the major artery leading into the main Wittenoom Gorge, starting from a seasonal, stepped waterfall and extending for a few kilometres to Junction Pool where Hancock and Weano Gorges enter from the west. The gorge along Joffre Creek demands some scrambling in the upper reaches, where a series of boulder chokes and small cliffs have to be negotiated. Following these drops is a succession of tranquil pools which stretch for up to a kilometre. Steep walls enclose this quiet creek, which is best paddled by air-mattress or inner-tube. Most parties take between six and ten hours to traverse its length in either direction.

Near right, the timeless grandeur of Weano Gorge. **Far right**, the water-polished rock of Hancock Gorge has been scoured to a metallic sheen. **Pages 50 and 51**, a scene to which no painting could compare: Junction Pool, lower Hancock Gorge. All photos David Wagland

Beyond this junction Joffre Gorge becomes Red Gorge for a kilometre or so until Knox Gorge enters from the south-east and the extensive Wittenoom Gorge snakes down to its namesake town. This main Joffre–Wittenoom gorge is home to

a huge variety of water birds, screeching galahs, euros, the rare Rothschilds rock wallaby and a variety of reptiles including, among many others, goannas, water dragons, legless lizards, frogs and pythons.





Knox

G O R G E

A traverse of Knox Gorge, one of the tributaries to the main gorge, is one of the more dramatic canyoning trips this area has to offer. Short and sharp, this tight cleft requires some scrambling down steep, polished chutes before two waterfalls have to be negotiated. The first waterfall in Knox Gorge is about a ten metre high water-slide/ski-jump—a totally blind commitment that ends in a deep and dark pool. As a follow-up, the second waterfall (also undercut) requires a 'safety jump' of about six-seven metres into shallow water. The further you can spring outwards during this leap, the deeper the landing, although it is common to touch the gravel bottom. It should be noted that jumping into water of unknown depth is very hazardous and prospective walkers should check the water levels and conditions (which can vary dramatically) with the ranger before embarking. There have been a few rescues in this canyon—which can be negotiated in one direction only—when contenders have balked on top of the second waterfall at the prospect of the intimidating jump.

Once at the junction with Red Gorge you can head left up that gorge to leave the system by way of Joffre or Hancock Gorges or turn right and follow Wittenoom Gorge to Wittenoom township.

Weano and Hancock

G O R G E S

The tributary gorges of Weano and Hancock offer exciting, short trips. The park ranger recommends that these gorges be visited by taking two return jaunts; the first from the Weano Gorge car-park to the top of the main waterfall, and the second a traverse of Hancock Gorge to the point at which a narrow opening leads into Red Gorge.

Both Weano and Hancock Gorges entail some pleasant chutes, narrow

hops not surprisingly, turned back at this point only to miss out on some of the treasures further downstream.

Every gorge system in the Karijini National Park is unique and worth while. Apart from trips through these features, a number of short walks and tracks follow the gorges' rims, providing a different perspective. The adjacent plateau country is in stark contrast to the gorges. Walking along these rims among spinifex, red hard-cap rock and termite mounds while being fanned by a hot desert breeze makes the cool solitude of

Karijini Gorges: the facts

When to go

The climate is tropical semi-arid, so the ideal time to visit is between April and September when the days are mild. However, during these cooler months the water in the deep, shaded pools can be bitterly cold. Winter canyoning trips definitely require at least thermal underwear and/or wet suits, particularly after a frosty night. If it's too chilly for canyoning, then there are some great high-country walks, including Mt Bruce, WA's second-highest mountain, which overlooks the mythical 'Mt Sheila' just west of the park.

Maps

The Wittenoom 1:100 000 Natmap covers all of Karijini National Park. The pamphlet *Visitor Information & Walk Trail Guide* is available from the ranger and includes a map of the park as well as useful information on the walks. Four 1:50 000 Army Survey sheets—*Powellina, Mulga Downs, Mt Frederick and Joffre*—may also be useful if you intend to venture off the established tracks.

Access

Karijini National Park is located about 1000 kilometres north of Perth and is reached by way of the towns of Tom Price, Wittenoom or Newman. Be prepared for many kilometres of sometimes lonely, corrugated gravel roads (except during winter school holidays when the 'traffic' is greater).

There is a variety of designated camping sites within the park, and a few water tanks. Walking routes in the park are graded, with the gorge trips described as 'Level 2' in difficulty. The ranger requires that parties planning such trips notify him of their intentions.

Permits

No permits are required for entering or camping within the park although recently installed 'Entrance Information Stations' on the park's main access roads request a voluntary donation of \$5.00 a car and \$2.00 a passenger. Camping is only permitted at designated campsites unless a prior arrangement has been reached with the ranger. For further information, contact the local National Park ranger at:

Karijini National Park, PO Box 29, Tom Price, WA 6751. Telephone: (091) 89 8157. Fax: (091) 89 9104.

Safety

The water in these deep, shaded gorges is extremely cold, especially from April to September—hypothermia is a real risk. The risks associated with the water-jumps are obvious. Some of the walks involve rock scrambling in precarious situations and should only be contemplated by experienced walkers or canyoneers. Walkers should be aware of the presence of asbestos tailings left over from mining operations in parts of Wittenoom Gorge. These should not be disturbed in any way; the mere presence of asbestos in this area may be hazardous to your health! ■

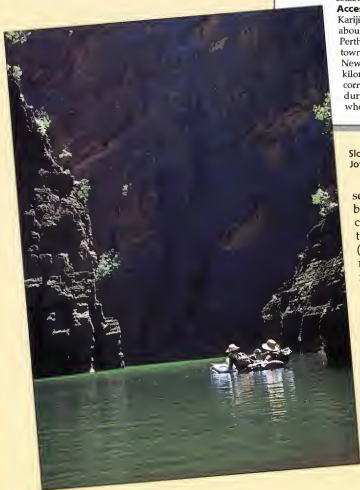
Slowly down the Ganges...er...
Joffre Gorge.

sections and pools often backlit by a rich red colour. Beyond where the tourist routes terminate (advertised with a barrage of warning signs recommending that only experienced rockclimbers or bushwalkers continue), you must wade and swim in a few places and negotiate a few precarious scrambles, particularly down Hancock Gorge where you are obliged to traverse an intimidating rock ledge ten metres above a pool. Many athletic bushwalkers have, per-

the gorges seem very tempting. Occasionally the rock piles of the ubiquitous pebble-mound mouse are seen, a reminder of the fascinating unit world that exists underground during our waking hours.

While there are no established overnight or extended walks in the park, it would be possible to follow parts of the creek systems (remembering to camp well away from water sources) or traverse some of the ridges and plateaux that may intersect reliable water en route. Before contemplating such an extended trip, walkers must contact the park's ranger for invaluable advice on water and other conditions in this harsh—yet breathtakingly spectacular—environment. ■

David Wagland enjoys the extremes of far-away places. His passion for outdoor pursuits, including rockclimbing and mountaineering, has provided opportunities to photograph many beautiful locations. His latest venture is a book on the Pilbara which he photographed and researched while working in the area as a geologist.




WILD CANOEING

THE ANTIDOTE

*Paul Hartley discovers
the cure for his 'river
sickness' on some
mystery New South
Wales white water*





The early morning mist dampened the sound of the crowds of Easter campers stirring and shrouded the river below our camp in a white blanket. I was up and packing my gear well before the others in my party, motivated by a need to escape the multitude surrounding us. While loading our boats—two kayaks and one four-person raft—at the water's edge, we attracted a small crowd of curious onlookers who took our photos and asked us questions about our planned journey. Despite our answers I sensed that many of the curious campers could not understand exactly what we were doing or why we were doing it.

Our enthusiasm for this journey was great. After two months of study we all wanted time to soak up some wild country and reacquaint ourselves with a simpler way of life—even if only for a week or so. We needed a wilderness white-water trip to challenge us. Three of the party were river guides who had been showing signs of acute 'river sickness'—withdrawal symptoms from a lack of the adrenalin white water induces. We also had new boats untested in the battlefield; the temptation was too much—we just had to go paddling!

The river we had chosen was one of perhaps only half a dozen in the south-east of mainland Australia that could provide the experience we were after. Rising in the high country it flows gently through farmland for the upper part of its course before carving a path down through an isolated escarpment to the ocean.

During its descent from the highlands to the sea the river drops 250 metres over some 35 kilometres—an average gradient of 20 metres every kilometre, with a peak gradient of 30 metres a kilometre over one three-kilometre section. In times of normal flow the river is a 'drop-pool' type consisting of a series of pools formed as a result of the damming of the river by intersecting rock strata. At regular intervals the river drops over these natural dikes, providing frequent rapids of a high standard. In flood, however, the rapids link up to form an unbroken length of huge water that puts fear in the hearts of even the best paddlers.

After what seemed an interminable time we eventually got under way floating down long pools and gentle rapids that barely hint at what is downstream. My fellow paddlers were as relieved as I to be away from the unexpected crowds at the put-in. Soon after leaving the last of 'civilisation' we met the first real white water for the trip, a 1.5 metre fall in the river, of note only because it is the first significant rapid encountered. Another one followed; then a double drop consisting of two sections of 1.5 metres each. The rapids began to merge in our minds as we ran one outstanding drop after another.

As we drifted through the quieter sections, the high, sandy beaches and perched driftwood told of the awesome power of the

With friends like these... (Experiencing the dubious pleasure of a 'seal launch'.) Kate Heffernan. **Previous page,** 'Mark testing his paddle for aerodynamic properties.' Paul Hartley



floods that occasionally scour this rocky bed. The realisation that the flow we were riding, while still powerful, was a paltry trickle in comparison to those infrequent torrents gave us a feeling of insignificance. There are no dams controlling the flow upstream of this section, and the knowledge that heavy overnight rain could swiftly bring a flood added an agreeable element of uncertainty to the trip.

We soon slipped into a rhythm of rapid-running, the kayakers doing most of the scouting and signalling the best route for the less agile raft. We ran most of the rapids on sight, pausing only at the bigger drops. To paddle a river in this way and make it down unscathed requires judgement, past experience, quick reflexes and an ability to read the hints provided by the river. We soon regained the exhilarating feeling that comes from running harder rapids on sight, often despite the fact that the best route is not immediately visible from the height of a kayak.

At many of the rapids the view from just upstream is of the foaming pool about two metres out from the base of the fall. We soon found that usually the best way to run rapids like this is to aim for the spot where most of the water is flowing out from the bottom of the rapid, get up a bit of speed, and ski-jump—or 'boof'—the drop, landing as flat as possible at the bottom. This method serves two purposes. It reduces the possibility of a vertical pin and entrapment, the nightmare scenario of all paddlers; and it lessens the likelihood of a damaged boat, a serious predicament on a remote river.

Feelings of increased confidence began to emanate from the rafters as they got used to manoeuvring the boat as a team. The presence of the raft on the trip was a distinct advantage. By carrying gear and food it allowed the kayakers to travel light—a freedom that was relished. The 'rubber bus' came into its own when running the really big drops as the danger of pinning is not a problem. Instead of submerging at the bottom of a deep fall the raft 'tacos'—the two ends of the raft bend up until they are almost touching, with the occupants acting as the filling.

The difficulty of the rapids increased steadily over the first three days, culminating in one section with drops of ten, five and three metres. We seal-launched next to the first fall, a thrilling swoop of speed which ended with a dunking in the water. After scouting the second rapid Mark looked at me and shook his head. 'I'll take the photos', he shouted above the noise of the water. We all decided to portage. The final drop—a three metre fall—is a fantastic roller-coaster ride into a soft cushion of deep, aerated water. Good judgement is essential on this river and we regularly erred on the side of caution, knowing



'The perfect antidote for "river sickness": Mark slides down a three metre waterfall into the deep pool'. **Right**, 'Kate surfacing for air after probing another sensational drop.' *Hartley*

that rescue would be difficult in the event of a pin and that evacuation on foot would be almost impossible due to the steep and friable cliffs around us.

Although we were paddling difficult rapids the focus was not entirely on white water. Everywhere around us the rock formations and the intricately twisted casuarinas kept us enthralled. Often the cliffs towered 80 metres above the water with the rim of the escarpment twice as high. Rhys, a keen climber, would test his soloing skills on the overhanging cliffs and keep us enter-

tained with his free falls into the water. We saw wedge-tailed eagles soaring on the currents of air generated by the sun on the hills. The scenery and the nature of the experience were comparable at times with the wild rivers of South-west Tasmania; warmer and drier but with the same feeling of enormous power and isolation.

The section of river we were paddling can be completed in as little as two days by small groups with prior knowledge—as can the Franklin—but we chose to take three times as long, preferring a process of slow absorption to a fast

fix. More time on the river also enabled us better to tune out the world of assignment deadlines, shopping centres and social norms we had left behind and to attune ourselves to a small community, simpler living and the ebb and flow of the river environment.

One night we camped in the middle of the riverbed surrounded by hectares of scoured rock folded into every conceivable shape, with waterfalls up- and downstream from us. Although we were deep in the gorge, the feeling of being in so remote a setting made us feel as though we were on top of a high peak. Such is the effect of the spectacular scenery and of the effort needed to get there.

In the morning I got up just as the sky was turning a pale grey, the light diffused to a soft, velvety texture by the time it reached the depths of the gorge. I walked slowly through the gunmetal-grey rock amphitheatre, savouring its many diversions—the symmetrical layer-

ing of rock, exposed in cross-section by innumerable floods; the tiny, gnarled tea-tree, twisted and trimmed by the same, their roots tapping an unseen source of life in cracks in the rock; the polished pebbles deep in a pot-hole, slowly drilling into the earth. The whole river oozed age and time, such a contrast to the human world beyond its course. Newness seems to stand out here, I thought, as my eyes caught sight of a tiny square of red fibreglass, a fragment of another adventure on this river.

I found myself drawn to the top of a rocky outcrop 30 metres above the river. I stood on the very edge and looked at the slow boils of water below my toes. The river looked deep and the temptation to lean forward and take the plunge grabbed me for an instant. A short distance downstream I could see another large drop spill the river into the next pool and out of habit I scanned it for the best way down. Eventually I stepped back from the edge and turned to see the sun already shining on the wall of the gorge. 'Coffee's on', I heard someone call from the camp. Time had got away from

me and I returned to camp and to the preparation for another day on the river.

A day later, after scouting one larger rapid, we floated in the quiet pool above, pumped up with adrenalin. A quick glance around the raft showed that the tension was not felt only by me. Rhys was sitting in the front, nervously bailing. Julie scooped up some water and splashed her face. Kate's knuckles were white as she gripped the paddle. We all knew what had to be done and as soon as everyone was ready I pushed us into the current, which pulled us out of the pool and down a sluiced channel barely wider than our raft.

With deceptive speed the water sucked us down the tunnel of rock which quickly became so narrow that the best we could do was to fend off the rocks and hold on. We were now totally committed to running the rapid even though we couldn't see or hear it. Suddenly we burst out of the channel and were greeted with the sight of the river disappearing down a four metre slide in front of us. 'Hold on!' was the call as we plunged off the edge and down the slide. Before any of us could react, the boat spun and we hit the still water of the pool side on. The edge of the raft lifted up beyond the

point of no return and we flipped over and plunged into the effervescent water. As soon as I surfaced I looked round for my friends and could see by the huge grins on their faces that they shared my feeling of joy.

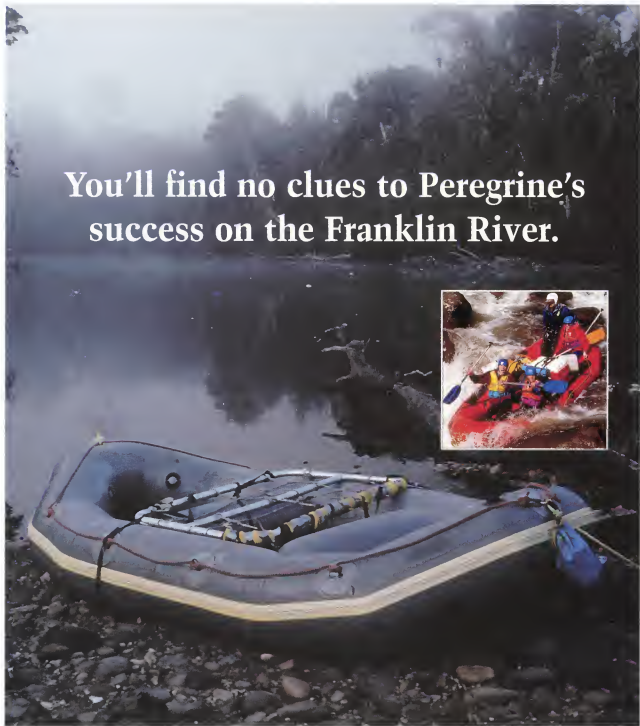
On the fifth day we reached our pull-out point, a faint pad leading up through the escarpment to a rough vehicle track some 300 metres higher. The walk up with our gear took half a day on this difficult hill but this is the price we had to pay for pulling out from the river early. Downstream the river continues, winding between cliffs for another five-seven days' worth of paddling before being impounded in the questionable name of flood control and water-supply.

After loading the vehicles for the journey south, we again lingered on the edge of the escarpment, our gaze drawn downwards to the river and gorge that had been our world for five days of excitement, spectacular beauty and shared experience. Gradually the sense of timelessness faded and we wandered slowly back to the vehicles. We camped at the top of the river in the same spot we had occupied six nights earlier. This time the camping area was almost deserted. Looking down the rocky riverbed again, I felt the next bout of 'river sickness' coming on already and a thought struck me. Turning to the others with a wicked grin, I said: 'Whaddya reckon, lets go again!' ■

Paul Hartley has been paddling for five years and has rafted and kayaked in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, including three summers on the Franklin River. He recently completed an Outdoor Education degree at La Trobe University, Bendigo, Victoria.



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ALKING THE LONG WHITE CLOUD

A bushwalker's guide to New Zealand's south-west,
by Derek Grzelewski

The biggest problem you'll face in coming to New Zealand's south-west is to decide where to go. From Okarito Lagoon in the north to the Cameron Mountains in the south, this 450 kilometre long and 35-80 kilometre wide strip of wilderness consists of four National Parks and several State Forests and Wilderness Areas.

Sprawling over 2.6 million hectares, the South-west New Zealand World Heritage Park contains an astonishing variety of landscapes and geographical features. The snow-clad peaks of the Southern Alps—many of them over 3000 metres in height—are sandwiched between the arid highlands of the McKenzie Country and Otago in the east and the verdant, temperate rain forest of the west. There are glaciers, fiords, lakes, white-water rivers, swamps and hundreds of kilometres of wild coastline, all within a few days' travel.

The local weather, which is caused by the abrupt meeting of the Tasman Sea and the Southern Alps, is almost legendary for its dampness and there are rumours that the West Coasters have webbed feet inside their lace-up gumboots. When asked how much rain they get in a year they are likely to reply: 'too bloody much'.

Rain is the main element in the south-west's ecosystem and its intensity and volume can reach extraordinary proportions. In March 1982 when a 72-hour storm dumped 650 millimetres of rain over Franz Josef township and 1810 millimetres atop Alex Knob in Westland National Park, a friend returning from the Dusky Track in Fiordland commented: 'I have seen rivers in flood before, but never the entire valley.' His bushwalk of eight days included a 200 metre 'swimming with the pack' section.

However, during my years of bushwalking through the south-west I've found that—with the exception of mountaineering trips and an occasional deluge of biblical proportions—coping with the weather here is very much a matter of attitude. If you come to visit rain forest, you should expect to get wet. After all, it is the rain which makes the south-west unique.

No scrub-bashing (or snakes) here! The north branch of the Route Burn, Fiordland. Both photos Derek Grzelewski



'Tramping' is the New Zealand term for bushwalking and it is used to describe anything from a guided tour of the Milford Track to an expedition of a few weeks into the Olivine wilderness. It also includes easy, non-mountainaineering alpine crossings. The south-west is very mountainous country; parts of it are steep and glaciated. There are many excellent high-alpine routes which do not involve technical climbing but often call for the use of an ice-axe, crampons and, sometimes, a rope.

There are many marked, graded and well-maintained tracks in the south-west which make the region accessible to bushwalkers of varying degrees of fitness and experience. Usually these tracks take three or four days, but they can frequently be linked together into longer trips. They are also convenient access routes into the other aspect of the south-west—trackless, hutless, remote and wild.

River crossings

The biggest danger you are likely to encounter while bushwalking in south-west New Zealand are flooded rivers. The rain forests covering the steep-sided mountain valleys receive vast quantities of rain but, like an enormous, saturated sponge, they haven't got the capacity to hold it all. The underlying bedrock channels the water into the rivers, causing them to rise and fall at a speed which has to be seen to be believed. Alphonse Barrington, a nineteenth century gold prospector, wrote: 'A creek, where yesterday there was only a few inches of water trickling through the boulders, this morning was a large foaming river running at 20 knots and with enough water to launch a good sized schooner'.

Charlie Douglas, indisputably the most revered explorer of the south-west, was known to say that he survived 40 years of river crossings only because he had never learnt to swim. (He also suggested that turning a billy upside-down inside a pack greatly improves the flotation properties of the latter.)

Back-country huts

Back-country huts are scattered throughout the south-west and come in three categories, ranging from basic roof-and-bunk shelters (category 1; \$NZ\$4.00 a night) through more modern, pre-fabricated structures (category 2; \$NZ\$8.00 a night) to luxurious, somewhat misplaced mansions equipped with gas stoves, lanterns and flush toilets (category 3; \$NZ\$14 a night). If you plan to bushwalk extensively in New Zealand an annual pass (\$NZ\$58) seems a sensible option although, unfortunately, it does not cover the category 3 huts or the mountaineering huts in Mt Cook and Westland.

Maps

For more serious bushwalking 1:63 360 (one inch to one mile) Department of Land and Survey topographical maps and 'Moir's guidebooks' published by the New Zealand Alpine Club, are essential. The 'Northern' section of 'Moir's' describes tracks and routes around Lakes Wakatipu, Wanaka and Hawea, the valleys of the Landsborough, Haast and Waitatou Rivers, and the Olivine country. The 'Southern' section is almost entirely devoted to Fiordland and covers all the major tracks (Milford, Routeburn, Hollyford and Dusky)

as well as many unmarked tracks, which are used by no more than one or two bushwalking parties a year. Both sections include excellent aerial photographs.

MT COOK NATIONAL PARK

Mt Cook National Park lies in the centre of the South Island, roughly at the latitude of the South-east Cape of Tasmania, and contains New Zealand's highest mountains and largest glaciers. As 40 per cent of its area is under permanent snow and ice, bushwalking opportunities are limited but the walks that exist are very spectacular.

An overnight trip to Mueller Hut (1798 metres) is a fine introduction to the park and offers superb views of Mt Cook, the Hooker Glacier and the East Face of Mt Sefton, the ice-cliffs of which shudder under frequent avalanches. An easy scramble to the summit of Mt Kitchener (2042 metres) broadens the view to include peaks surrounding the Mueller Glacier, Annette Plateau and Mt Sealy (2637 metres).

A day trip not to be missed while you are in the Mt Cook area is to follow the old Ball Hut road to the Ball Shelter for a view of the Tasman Glacier, one of the largest in the world. Travelling beyond this point requires at least basic mountaineering knowledge and equipment. A good description of possible routes is contained in Hugh Logan's *The Mount Cook Guidebook*, available at the park headquarters.

Copland Pass Track

The best-known walk in the Mt Cook area is the Copland Pass route—a spectacular journey of three to four days over the 2150 metre high pass and into the Copland valley in Westland National Park. Its alpine section requires the use of ice-axes and crampons. Less experienced parties usually hire a guide for this part of the crossing.

The track leaves Mt Cook Village and heads towards the White Horse Hill—a large moraine marking what was once the confluence of the Mueller and Hooker Glaciers. Two bridges span the turbulent Hooker River and beyond them the track meanders through alpine meadows, climbs up to saddle above the terminal lake of the Hooker Glacier and follows the edge of its old lateral moraine to reach Hooker Hut (1129 metres) two to three-and-a-half hours after leaving the village.

The 1000 metre climb to the top of the pass and a 1450 metre descent to the Douglas Rock Hut takes eight to ten hours and requires an early start. A sparsely marked track traverses a wide gully and climbs up the ridge of broken rock until it reaches a barrel-shaped emergency shelter some 150 metres below the Copland Pass.

A permanent snow-field (ice-axes and crampons absolutely essential) leads up to the craggy north of the pass from where you get your first glimpse of the luxuriant west coast valleys and the Tasman Sea. The track descends 50 metres by a very steep rock gully which fans out into a wide scree slope dotted with clumps of buttercups and white-petalled edelweiss.

The track then descends sharply along the crest of a ridge and is well marked with orange poles. There are several river crossings which can be troublesome after heavy rain. The Douglas Rock Hut (700 metres) is just below the bush-line.



TRACK NOTES



Walkers above the Sealy Tarns, left, on the way to Mueller Hut, in the shadow of New Zealand's highest peak, Mt Cook.

From here it is a pleasant three-hour walk to Welcome Flat Hut, well known for its hot pools. They were discovered by Charlie Douglas in about 1896 and no doubt he recuperated here after his prolonged escapades into the interior. Another five to six hours of easy walking are needed to reach the West Coast Road (State Highway 6).

The Copland Pass can be traversed in both directions although an east-to-west crossing seems to be more favoured. The track characterises the nature of the south-west

with its variety and contrasts: the glaciers and steaming hot pools; 3000 metre high mountains and the view of the Tasman Sea; the desert-like scree slopes of Mt Cook National Park and an explosion of plant- and bird-life in Westland—on the Copland Pass route it can all be experienced in a couple of days.

WESTLAND NATIONAL PARK

Westland National Park lies to the west of Mt Cook and for some 64 kilometres both parks share a boundary. The park's most distinctive feature is its glaciers; there are some 60 of them scattered among the mountain ranges.

The largest of these are the Fox and Franz Josef—enormous blobs of ice, each sprawling over some 35 square kilometres. Their outlets are steep and narrow and the ice pours through these bottleneck gorges at the astonishing speed of two to three metres a day. The narrow sections are several kilometres long and the glaciers, losing their energy along the way and breaking into a fury of frozen rapids, do not spill on to the valley flats but instead—suddenly running out of omph—terminate in jagged snouts.

Unlike the majority of the world's glaciers, which have been steadily retreating for over a century, the Franz Josef is rapidly advancing and the neighbouring Fox is considered to be about to do the same. The heavy snowfalls of recent winters assures that the advance of these glaciers should continue for the immediate future.

Apart from the Copland Pass Track, the western end of which traverses a small section of this park, bushwalking in Westland National Park consists mostly in day trips. Some, such as the Alex Knob and Cone Rock walks, afford dramatic vistas of the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers. There is also a variety of coastal walks from Okarito to Gillespies Beach which offer panoramic views of the Southern Alps and the surf-ravaged shores of the Tasman Sea.

Following the Karangarua River is an easy walk, but beyond the Cassel Flats there begins, as one nineteenth century explorer put it, 'a splendid country to wear out old clothes'. Trips up the Cook, Tātare and Callery Rivers are best described as 'epics' and attract only a handful of the most enthusiastic bushwalkers. Other routes in the area, such as the Baker or Graham Saddle crossings, involve extensive glacier travel and thus require sound mountaineering experience.

MT ASPIRING NATIONAL PARK

South of the Haast Highway (State Highway 6) and encircling New Zealand's only 3000 metre mountain outside the Mt Cook-Westland complex, lies Mt Aspiring National Park. Bushwalking here usually entails long, open valley travel and steep climbs over mountain passes. The four to five-day Rees-Dart circuit is probably the best-known track



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in the area. It can be combined with walks in the West Matukituki valley by way of an alpine crossing of the Cascade Saddle (1500 metres).

Another great bushwalk is the East Matukituki-Wilkin-Siberia-Young route, a challenging six to eight-day trip featuring two alpine passes and some serious river crossings. Excellent side-trips can be made to the high-alpine valleys of Lake Crucible and to the north branch of the Wilkin River.

FIORDLAND NATIONAL PARK

Fiordland National Park has a landscape unequalled in the entire south-west. The ice-age glaciers gouged ancient river valleys into deep canyons which, as the ice retreated, gradually filled with water and became fiords. Swathed in dense rain forest they are the spectacular symbol of the New Zealand wilderness.

Routeburn Track

The Routeburn Track is probably the most popular track in the south-west and tends to get rather crowded during summer. Yet it only takes a short side-trip to the north branch of the Route Burn or the Valley of Trolls, for example, to forget all about huts bursting at the seams. In winter the Routeburn Track becomes a journey through an unrivalled alpine wonderland.

The track crosses the Main Divide from Mt Aspiring to Fiordland National Park over the 1281 metre high Harris Saddle and features an astonishing variety of mountain landscapes. It is 30 kilometres long and has four category 3 huts and an emergency shelter on the saddle. Access is either from Glenorchy, 50 kilometres north-west from Queenstown, or from the divide on the way from Te Anau to Milford Sound. The Routeburn Track is often combined with either the Greentone or Caples tracks (easy walks through open valleys and bush) thus making a six to eight-day round trip.

Kepler Track

Completed in 1988, the Kepler Track is the newest of Fiordland's tracks. A comfortable 'mountain highway' encompasses a 65 kilometre long loop along the ridge of the Kepler Mountains and is usually walked anticlockwise over three to five days.

From the Control Gate Bridge some five kilometres out of Te Anau, the track meanders through a forest of tall beeches and zigzags steeply across the slopes of Mt Luxmore. Above the bush-line are splendid views of Lake Te Anau and the Murchison Mountains, the takahē sanctuary. Further on is Luxmore Hut (1085 metres) and an interesting short trip into some limestone caves (bring a torch).

From here the track climbs towards the Luxmore Saddle (1200 metres) and traverses along the summit ridge. This section, which features spectacular views of Fiordland's mountains and lakes, is very exposed; it can snow here at any time of the year. There are two emergency shelters (at Hanging Valley and Forest Burn) but there is no water along the ridge.

The track descends to the Iris Burn Hut and, further down, Lake Manapouri and Moturau Hut. Another six kilometres along the lake shore and the Waiau River completes the circuit.

Hollyford Track

The Hollyford Track is the only major low-altitude bushwalk in Fiordland. It starts at the end of the Lower Hollyford Road and ends 60 kilometres further on in Martins Bay on the shore of the Tasman Sea. The track follows the course of the Hollyford River, climbs over Little Homer Saddle and sidles the eastern side of Lake McKerrrow. This elongated, semicircular lake was once the northernmost fiord in New Zealand until the river's alluvial deposits blocked off its entrance.

The track is very easy except for the five to six-hour rocky, undulating traverse of Lake McKerrrow known as the Demon Trail. There are six comfortable huts along the way, plenty of good camping spots and superb views of the Darran Mountains and spectacular Mt Tutoko (2746 metres), the highest peak in Fiordland.

At the northern end of the track, near Long Reef, is a breeding colony of rare Fiordland crested penguins—40 centimetres tall Charlie Chaplin look-alikes with characteristic bushy, yellow eyebrows. From Martins Bay you have the option of either walking out the same way, flying or jet-boating out, or following the Big Bay-Pyke route.

The Big Bay-Pyke-Lake Wilmot-Lake Alabaster loop adds another four to six days to the trip and makes the Hollyford Track look like a stroll through a botanical garden. It is a rugged and infrequently travelled wilderness track including several unbridged rivers (which can be impassable in flood), swamps, dense bush and scrub. Olive Hut, half-way between Lakes Wilmot and Alabaster, is the only hut along this adequately marked but overgrown route; an insect-proof tent is essential.

Dusky Track

The Dusky Track is a Y-shaped track with its apex anchored in the West Arm of Lake Manapouri, Supper Cove (in Dusky Sound) and the northernmost tip of Lake Hauroko. It is 84 kilometres long, takes four to eight days to complete and has always been something of a 'black sheep' in the family of Fiordland tracks—relatively remote, difficult and not widely publicised.

The track is rough but well marked and the huts are basic. The most spectacular part of the entire trip is the walk along the tops of the aptly named Pleasant Range from Lake Roe to Loch Maree. If you are walking only the West Arm-Supper Cove part of the track and return the same way, an overnight side-trip to Lake Roe Hut is a must.

It is worth spending a day or two at Supper Cove, provided that you have an ample supply of sand-fly repellent. There is a 12-bunk hut and a free dinghy to row in a dusky hour.

The Dusky Track is accessible only by boat, either from Manapouri (a daily service) or Taupere (charter service only). Float-plane charters to Supper Cove and food drops are also available. Parts of the track are prone to (sometimes severe) flooding so plan your trip carefully.

George Sound Track

If the Dusky Track is little known, the George Sound Track is almost forgotten. It begins at the north-west tip of the Middle Fiord, a branch of Lake Te Anau which cuts between Mt Stuart and Murchison. Access is by charter boat, float-plane or helicopter. All of these options are expensive (around \$NZ120-200 a person one way).

To begin the track proper you first have to row the length of Lake Hankinson using one of the Department of Conservation's (DOC) dinghies. This takes two to three hours. From Hankinson Hut, which is at the head of the lake, the track follows Canyon Creek and then traverses along the north side of Lake Thomson to an eight-bunk hut next to the Wapiti River crossing.

After crossing a boggy stretch of the Deadwood Lagoon, the track climbs above the bush-line to the 817 metre high Henry Pass and drops steeply into the valley of Katherine Creek, which empties itself into George Sound. There is an eight-bunk hut here and another of the DOC's dinghies allows a short rowing trip towards the spectacular Alice Falls. There is also a roughly marked route to Lake Alice—the source of the falls—leading from the end of the beach nearest to the hut.

Milford Track

Much has been said and written about the Milford Track and over the years the tag of 'the finest walk in the world' has perhaps done more harm than good. It is the only New Zealand track which has to be pre-booked. It has to be walked in one direction (from Glade Wharf northwards to Sand-fly Point) and only one night is allowed in each of the three National Park huts. As both ends of the track are only accessible by boat, the number of visitors is effectively controlled. Clearly, it's not everyone's cup of tea.

To many bushwalkers, myself included, the idea of being hurried from hut to hut without enough time to absorb the subtleties of the wilderness is unacceptable. There is, however, a simple, if somewhat colder and less comfortable alternative.

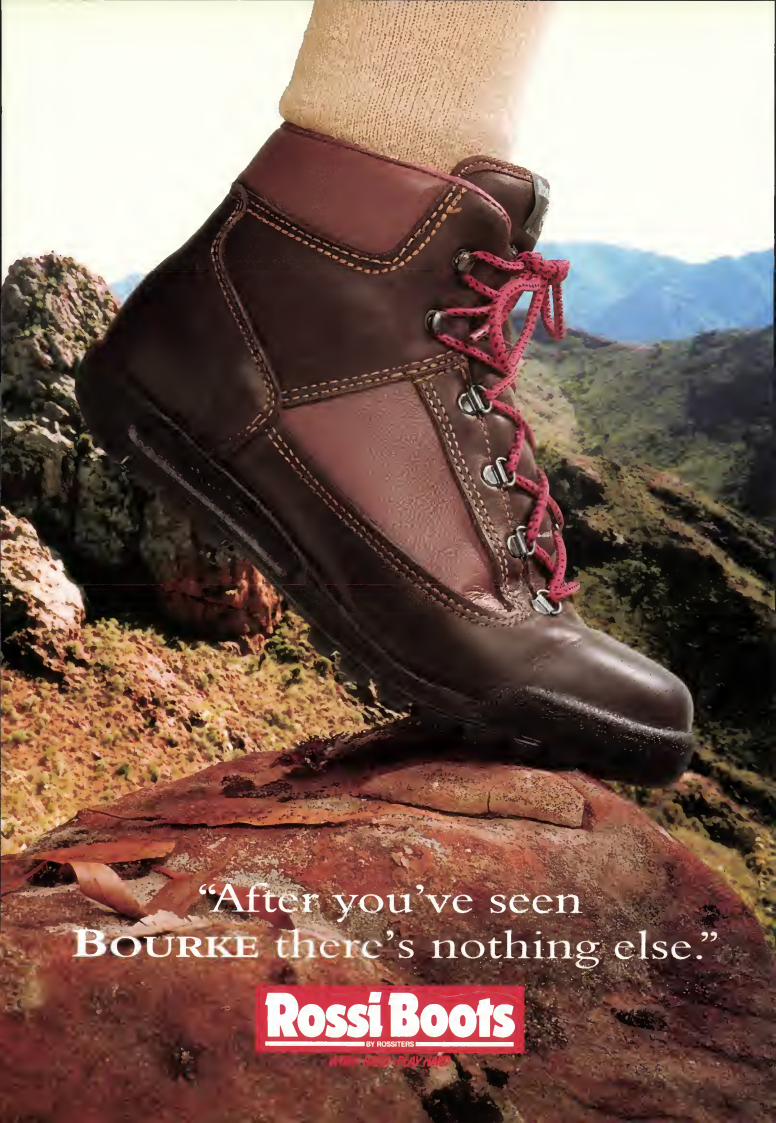
Around the end of May the fresh sou'wester brings in crisp Antarctic air and drapes the mountains with snow, also sweeping away the last of the summer crowds. At this time the out-of-season south-west regains its charm, and solitude returns to the wilderness.

A hundred years ago Charlie Douglas wrote of the upper Copland valley:

If a road was only built through this country, winter would be the time to visit it. Let some enterprising traveller or alpine explorer just try up a Westland river in winter and the glories of the mountains will show themselves to their eyes. The extra dangers at that season are mostly imaginary, though the extra discomfort is certainly not.

But that, I think, is a fair price. ■

Derek Grzelewski is a free-lance writer and photographer somewhat vaguely anchored in Wanaka, New Zealand. His assignments have taken him from the summit of Mt Cook to the outskirts of Fiordland. He was recently seen buying a map of Australia.



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Giant pandani palms in Tasmania's Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park.

Right, alpine garden below Carruthers Peak, Kosciuszko National Park, New South Wales.

Opposite, seaweed detail, Mimosa Rocks National Park, NSW. **Page 67**, banksia leaves, Mimosa Rocks National Park.



Geoff Woods is a widely published photographer from Charlestown, New South Wales, whose work has appeared regularly in Australian Conservation Foundation diaries and in photographic magazines. He has travelled extensively along the coastlines of Victoria and New South Wales and on the Main Range of Kosciuszko National Park, but his favourite walking destinations are the wilderness areas of Tasmania.



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M O U N T A I N . S A F E T Y . R E S E A R C H

LIGHTWEIGHT STOVES

John Hillard brings us to the boil

A lightweight stove should be a part of any outdoor person's gear. Twenty years ago you might have managed without one, since many bushwalking and ski touring parties relied on campfires for cooking. But those days are now gone in many parts of Australia. In some areas the use of fuel stoves is mandatory—for example, South-west Tasmania and the Mt Bogong and Mt Feathertop areas in Victoria. In any high alpine area their use is strongly recommended due to the limited amount of fuel-wood available and the fragility of the environment.

This article will discuss the issues involved in choosing a lightweight stove, and then look in more detail at the



Points to watch

Fuel

Is the fuel readily available everywhere you will be using the stove?

Wind resistance

Is the burner well shielded from the wind?

Build quality

Will bits of the stove break, corrode or fall off?

Burner type

Plate burners are great for melting snow, but won't simmer well.

Lighting

Does it have a built-in spark generator (piezo-electric or flint) or do you use a match?

Refilling

Is a single load of fuel enough to cook a whole meal; how fiddly is it to refill; and is it easy to relight when hot?

Maintenance

How often will it need maintenance and how easy is it to pull apart?

Extended trips

How much fuel will you need to carry?

Overseas use?

Buy multifuel or kerosene.

Cost

Fuel costs are high for gas stoves if they are used frequently.

Stability

Is it likely to be stable on uneven ground or in the snow?

Noise

How noisy is it in operation? ■

It's not exactly camp-fire country—refuelling in the Snowy Mountains, New South Wales. Glenn Tempest

things that will determine its reliability. There is much additional information available from previous *Wild* articles which you might also like to refer to. Gary Higgins (*Wild* no 40) identified substantial differences between different stove models depending on whether the stove was used in still air or wind, or in mild or cold conditions. Also, my previous article (*Wild* no 42) compared the weight and cost of different stove types at different levels of use, and discussed the general precautions that you should observe in using any stove.

Choosing a stove

The choice of a stove should be a two-step process. First, decide what fuel type is most suited to your intended use, then select the particular model which you prefer. The advantages and disadvantages of each fuel type are covered thoroughly in *Wild* no 42 while the table with this survey shows the features of the brands and models that are most commonly available. Like most items of

outdoor gear, there is no ideal stove. In buying one you should look for the compromise that best suits your intended use. Specifically, ask yourself the following key questions:

What margin of safety do I need?

All of these stoves are safe, provided they are used sensibly. To use any stove safely you must keep flammable material at a safe distance, ensure adequate ventilation, place the stove on a stable surface, and take care when handling fuel. The stove types that will offer the greatest margin of safety are those that are the simplest to use and which require the least volatile fuels. For these reasons alcohol stoves are better suited to less experienced users. Gas is also easy to use but the high volatility of the fuel increases the risk if a gas stove is *not* used correctly. Shellite and kerosene stoves, although safe in experienced hands, are not a good choice for inexperienced users since they are more complicated to operate and use more volatile fuels. The ratings in the table for safety are largely based on the volatility of the stove's fuel. The true safety of a stove has more to do with how carefully it is used rather than its design.

How often, for how long, and under what conditions am I likely to use it?

All of the stoves in the table are quite suitable for weekend walking; however, the stoves burning solid fuel tablets are really only suited to day walks or emergency use. Also, butane gas stoves are not suited to very cold

This survey summarises the findings of the writer, who was selected for the task for, among other things, his/her knowledge of the subject and for his/her impartiality. The survey was checked and verified by Glenn Tempest, and reviewed by at least three of *Wild's* editorial staff. Despite such efforts to achieve accuracy and impartiality, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

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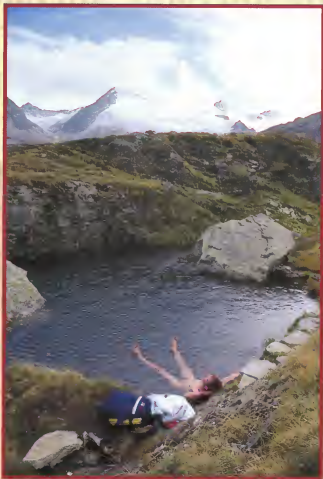


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conditions (although propane/butane-fuelled stoves may work better). Alcohol and gas stoves have the advantage of being easy to use and their poorer fuel efficiency is not a major limitation on shorter walks. If you plan to use the stove often or on extended trips and/or in severe weather conditions (cold, wind and snow), Shellite or kerosene stoves are preferable due to their fuel efficiency and high energy output. For overseas use, multifuel or kerosene stoves are essential as Shellite is very difficult to obtain (even if you know the local brand name) and even petrol is sometimes not available. You'll also need to buy the fuel at your destination since fuel must not be carried on aircraft.

How important is weight to me?

If you tend only to make occasional weekend trips, the weight differences between stoves of different fuel types are unlikely to be significant. It is those people who embark on longer trips who are most likely to appreciate the weight advantage from using the more efficient fuels such as Shellite and kerosene, rather than alcohol or gas.

Do I want a stove with a low purchase price?

The stove that best suits your intended use is your lowest cost option, even if it has a higher purchase price. This might sound paradoxical, but it is true. If the stove with the lower

initial purchase price turns out not to be suited to your intended use, it will cost you more in the long run as you'll end up buying another later on. If you are a heavy stove user any initial saving you make by buying a gas stove will quickly be offset by the much higher ongoing fuel cost. While not underestimating your requirements, you should try to avoid buying extra features that you don't need. For example, if you're only going to burn Shellite, there is not much point in spending extra money on a multifuel stove.

What do I plan to cook on it?

If you want to cook food that requires low, even heat (for example, damper), then a stove with a ported burner is likely to be more suitable than one with a plate burner (these burners are described in the footnotes to the table). Most stoves now have ported burners since they distribute heat more evenly under the pot than does a plate burner, thus reducing the risk of you having to scrape your meal off the bottom of the pot. Of the fuel types, gas stoves allow by far the greatest control over heat. It is much more difficult to get most Shellite and kerosene stoves to simmer.

Reliability

How reliable your stove is going to be depends on two things: the technology it uses and how you use (or misuse) the stove.

First, the technology. It is with the Shellite, kerosene and multifuel stoves that variations in technology are more likely to affect reliability. The other kinds of stove (gas, alcohol and solid fuel) are inherently reliable since they use very simple technology. They have few moving parts and require little maintenance except for the occasional replacement of seals in the gas stoves. How long they will last is mainly determined by the type of materials used in the burner and the quality of assembly.

So, what are the technological variations between different types of Shellite, kerosene and multifuel stoves? The most obvious changes that have been incorporated into some stove designs in the past 20 years are: direct connection of fuel-bottles to burner units; the addition of pumps to petrol stoves to increase operating pressure; and the looping of the feed pipe through the burner to preheat the fuel.

While these changes might not appear earth-shattering, they have significantly improved the efficiency and ease of use of many stoves. But there is also a downside to these additional features—they each add extra components to the fuel system, thus creating potential problems. Taking the fuel feed directly from the fuel-bottle creates greater potential for fuel leaks; the pumps

Wild Gear Survey Lightweight stoves

Fuel	Stove (grams)	Tank (grams)	Fuel (grams)	Total (grams)	Burner type	Boil time, (minutes)	Stability	Safety	Heat control	Quietness	Snow use	Approx price, \$
Camping Gaz France Bluet 470HP	Gas	230	135	230	595	Ported	5	●●	●●●	●●●●	●●	50
Gibbetrotter	Gas	460	135	230	825	Ported	6	●●	●●●	●●●●	●●	70
Coleman USA Feather 442	Shellite	850	nap*	100	750	Ported	4	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●●	85
Apex	Shellite	500	80	100	680	Ported	5	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●●	110
Peak 1	Multifuel	650	nap*	120	770	Ported	4	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●●	130
Epigas UK 3005HP	Gas	205	130	220	555	Ported	5	●●	●●●	●●●●	●●	45
MSR USA Whisperlite	Shellite	400	80	120	620	Ported	3	●●	●●	●●	●●●●	115
Whisper Int.	Multifuel	425	80	105	610	Ported	3	●●	●●	●●	●●●●	140
X-GK	Multifuel	450	80	105	635	Plate	3	●●●	●●	●●	●●●●	180
Optimus Sweden Climber 123	Shellite	550	nap*	120	670	Plate	4	●	●●	●●	●	100
Trapper	Methylated spirits	625	80	170	875	Funnel	8	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●●●	110
00	Kerosene	700	nap*	120	820	Plate	9	●●	●●●	●●	●●●	120
Hunter ER	Shellite	600	nap*	150	750	Plate	6	●●	●●	●●	●	125
Primus UK 3233 Spider	Gas	375	110	220	705	Ported	5	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	110
Sigg Switzerland Traveler	Methylated spirits	na	na	na	1200	Pot	na	●●●●	●●	●●	●●●●	110
Fire-Jet	Multifuel	350	100 (800 ml)	575	1025	Ported	na	●●●●	●●	●●	na	130
Trangia Sweden 27-1	Methylated spirits	430	80	230	740	Pot	8	●●●●	●●	●●	●●●●	110

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent na information not available nap* not applicable (tank is integrated with stove) Further information 1 Methylated spirits (alcohol) stove weight is windshield and support only (excluding pots). 2 Fuel weight is that required to boil eight litres of water (representing the amount of fuel that you might use on a typical weekend trip) except for gas stoves where a full can is assumed. 3 Boil time is at 20°C at sea level in still air for one litre of water. 4 Boil time for multifuel stoves is calculated burning Shellite. 5 Plate (or "casser") burners are flat shaped—the fuel sprays out of the jet and hits the plate which then spreads the flame. 6 Ported burners are the kind of burner found on your gas stove at home. The fuel/air mix burns out of multiple openings. 7 ● indicates that these gas stoves would have a higher rating when using propane/butane fuel rather than pure butane. 8 The two Sigg stoves were unable to be tested by the surveyor at the time of completion of the table.



Hunza River Pakistan, Clean, Tempest/Open Space, Photograph



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WILD GEAR SURVEY

used to pressurise stoves contain moving parts that can wear or fail; and preheat loops provide more opportunities for blockages by fuel deposits. Overall, these features are worth having but stoves with such features may require more maintenance than the simpler designs.

What impact does the way you operate your stove have on its reliability? The first thing to think about is the fuel itself. Both kerosene and Shellite have components, and sometimes contaminants, that can block your stove. The more you can do to ensure your fuel is pure and clean, the less often you will have to clean your stove. Kerosene from bulk sources is often contaminated (particularly the stuff they sell as kero in Nepal) and you should filter it before putting it into your fuel tank. Shellite is generally cleaner but you should store and handle it carefully to ensure it stays that way.

Secondly, make sure you preheat your stove sufficiently before opening the main fuel supply. It should quickly settle to a blue flame when you open the throttle. If you get large, yellow flames (flaring), then the stove was not hot enough. Aside from being a potential hazard, flaring will increase carbon deposits and ultimately create blockages.

Thirdly, perform basic maintenance on the stove on a regular basis, rather than waiting for problems to arise. While many stoves advertise themselves as 'field maintainable', you should decrease the risk of emergencies. It's no fun having to pull your stove apart when you're cold and hungry at the end of a long day. The regular maintenance procedures are usually simple and will be covered in the instruction sheet that comes with the stove. It will usually involve cleaning the line that takes the fuel from the bottle to the burner. After a while you'll also need to do a more major service involving replacement of the rubber seals in the pump.

If you use your stove frequently you may find that, despite carrying out the recommended maintenance, its performance is still inadequate. I've met quite a few people who have had stoves with this problem, particularly those stoves with relatively long fuel lines and preheat loops. The reason appears to be that, over time, even relatively clean fuels like Shellite leave deposits which can be difficult to clear. The stove-fire way of fixing this is to get your stove cleaned ultrasonically which blasts it back to bare metal. Ultrasonic cleaning is mainly used by jewellers to clean old jewellery but their machines tend not to be large enough to take a stove burner unit. I'm not sure about other manufacturers, but MSR will do a full service on your stove for about \$US15 (plus parts and postage) which includes ultrasonic cleaning. You have to send the stove to them in the USA, but you can get them to charge it to your Australian credit card number.

Footnote:

Thanks to Colin McKenzie of TW Sands & Co for his comments on this article. (Sands, a long-established Melbourne company, is expert in repairing all kinds of liquid fuel appliances.)

John Hillard works in the oil and gas business and has bushwalked and cross-country skied in Australia and New Zealand, as well as in the UK, Europe and Asia, for 25 years.

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GAITERS

Spats for the outdoors—a *Wild* survey

Wild Equipment Survey Gaiters

	Material	Closure type/position	Fastening beneath boot	Ease of use	Protection	Durability	Comments	Approx price, \$
Alking Australia Full Canvas Gaiter	Canvas, Cordura	Wide Velcro, top toggle and bottom strap/spiral	Eyebolt, cord	●●●	●●	●●●		60
Berghaus UK Yak Attack	Gore-Tex	Zip, Velcro/front	Rubber rand	●●	●●●	●●	Designed for Scarpa Attack walking boots	139
Yak Extrem	Gore-Tex, Cordura	As above	As above	●●	●●●	●●½		149
Contour New Zealand (Unnamed)	Cordura	Velcro, snaps/rear	Loops, cord	●●½	●●	●●●		30
Masopas New Zealand Classic	Canvas	Velcro, snaps/rear	Eyebolt, cord	●●½	●●	●●●		58
Snow Gaiter	Canvas, Cordura	Velcro, top and bottom strap/front	As above	●●●	●●	●●●		70
Orananga Fi Spats Gaiters	Canvas, Cordura	Velcro, snaps/rear	Loops, cord	●●	●●	●●●		55
Outdoor Research USA Kidd Gaiters	Nylon	Velcro, top and bottom strap/front	Eyebolt, cord	●●●	●●	●●		30
Rocky Mountain Low Gaiters	Nylon	As above	As above	●●●	●	●●	Ankle height only	35
Rocky Mountain High Gaiters	Gore-Tex, nylon	Velcro, top buckle and bottom strap/front	As above	●●●	●●	●●		60
Crocodiles	Gore-Tex, Cordura	Wide Velcro, top buckle/front	Neoprene strap, metal buckle	●●●	●●	●●½		79
Expedition Crocodiles	As above	As above	Releasable neoprene strap, metal buckle	●●●	●●	●●●		99
Brooks Rangers	As above	As above	Cordura rand	●●●	●●●	●●●	Specialised overboot for cold-weather mountaineering	199
Outgear Australia Bovarying Gaiter	Canvas, Cordura	Velcro, snaps, top buckle/side	Loops, cord	●●●	●●	●●●		69
Savemir Australia (Unnamed)	Canvas, Cordura	Velcro, snaps/side	Loops, cord	●●	●●	●●		60
Tafelberg Vietnam Nylon Gaiter	Nylon	Zip/rear	Rings, cord	●●●	●●	●		20
Cordura Gaiter	Cordura	Zip/rear	As above	●●●	●●	●●		25
Travelling Gaiter	Cordura	Velcro, snaps/rear	As above	●●●	●●	●●		32
Torgres China Zip Gaiter	Nylon	Zip, bottom straps/side	Loops, cord	●●●	●●	●		20
(Unnamed)	Nylon	Velcro, snaps/rear	Nylon strap, plastic buckle	●●●	●●	●		30
(Unnamed)	Cordura	Wide Velcro, top and bottom straps/side	As above	●●	●●	●●	Half calf-length model \$30	33
Vertical Australia (Unnamed)	Canvas	Velcro, snaps/side	Loops, cord	●●	●●	●●●	Adjusting strap behind heel	49
Wilderness Equipment Australia Canvas Gaiters	Canvas, Cordura	Velcro, snaps/front	As above	●●	●●	●●●		56
Gore-Tex Gaiters	Gore-Tex, Cordura	As above	As above	●●	●●	●●		73

● average ●● good ●●● excellent

This survey summarises the findings of the writer, who was selected for the task for, among other things, his/her knowledge of the subject and for his/her impartiality. The survey was checked and verified by John Chapman, and reviewed by at least three of *Wild's* editorial staff. Despite such efforts to achieve accuracy and impartiality, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.



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Looked at from any angle, gaiters have a tough job. In the process of selflessly protecting your feet, legs, boots and socks from all kinds of hazards they get pushed through scrub, scraped against rocks and plunged into mud and snow. Every step grinds the underside of a bushwalker's gaiters into an inhospitable surface. Perhaps the unluckiest gaiters of all belong to mountaineers—who stab them with crampon points—and telemark skiers, who tend to slice them with their skis' metal edges during radical turns. In short, gaiters have to be tough.

Gaiters must be especially rugged on the inside of the lower section, where boots, skis and crampons do most of their damage. That's why many gaiters are made from one material from the ankle up and another, stronger material from the ankle down, and why some have an extra layer of protection on the inside lower section.

The closure (which allows you to take them on and off without having to remove your footwear) is perhaps the trickiest aspect of gaiter design and construction and is the commonest cause of frustration to their wearers. Various types and combinations of fasteners have been tried—hook-and-loop tape (such as Velcro) of various widths, zips, press studs and snap fasteners. The bottom end of the closure is especially prone to failure; this is where the wear-and-tear is heaviest and it's probably worth looking out for gaiters with some reinforcement in this area. Note that if the closure is at the front, the

cord or strap beneath the boot can remain fastened when you take your gaiters off; this then makes them easier to put on the next time you use them.

If you're walking across rocky ground, the bit that secures the gaiter beneath the boot gets real punishment. Hence, many gaiters are designed so that this cord or strap can be easily replaced. The rubber rand on some gaiters—which seals very snugly round the rand of the boot—is also vulnerable. This rand can be replaced, but it's quite a job.

When shopping for gaiters it's a good idea to try them on over your own boots. And, as not all boots are alike, you may find it necessary to own two pairs of gaiters—one for bushwalking and another to fit over your bulky telemark boots or plastic mountaineering boots. Addicts of spring skiing—and some bushwalkers, too—may even consider the luxury of an additional pair of low-cut ankle gaiters for warmer weather.

Nick Tapp

RUCKSACKS

Packing it in

There are three models in the new range of *Berghaus day packs*—the *XF* ('cross-functional') range—each designed for sports where movement is a major factor (such as in cross-country skiing). While each pack is different, they all feature compression straps for stability, a padded back, two mesh pockets and a map pocket. The *XF Aero* has a volume

of 20 litres and consists of one main compartment; the *XF Dynamo* has a 25-litre capacity with one main compartment and one zip pocket; and the *XF Topo* holds 35 litres with one main compartment and a zip pocket. The two large packs also have a removable padded back. Distributed by *Outdoor Agencies*, they sell for RRP \$69.90, \$89.90 and \$119, respectively.

There's also a new range of *rucksacks* made by *Tatonka*, and distributed in Australia by *Outdoor Survival Australia*. The packs feature a removable harness, padded back, two compartments, side compression- straps and a carry-handle on the back. They come in three sizes—the *Basalt* (25 litres), *Granite* (36 litres) and *Ruby* (45 litres). Prices range from around \$70 to \$120.

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

New kid on the block

The *Kanga Pouch*, a Polartec 200 (the middle weight) *pullover*, is a new product from yet another fleece garment manufacturer, *Extreme*. Its main features are a zip pouch on the front and zippered hand-warmer pockets which can double as another large pocket. RRP \$180.

More kid stuff

An article in a New Zealand newspaper about underprivileged pre-school children being cold because their parents couldn't afford warm clothing for them prompted *Kathmandu* to donate 33 *fleece jumpers* to the pre-school children concerned. This gesture sparked such interest that Kathmandu has introduced a programme involving the donation of 400 Polartec jumpers to underprivileged children in both Australia and New Zealand this winter, and a further 1000 jumpers next winter.

Walk right in

At a glance the *Ranger walking boot* from Italian manufacturer *Denon* looks like any other leather boot—but don't be fooled by appearances. Although it has many of the features you would expect from a quality, Italian-made boot—such as a Vibram sole—its main upper material is not leather but a combination of polyester and polyurethane. In fact, there are no animal products whatsoever used in its construction. The upper material is claimed to be both waterproof and breathable. These animal-friendly boots are available by mail-order

Animal, vegetable or mineral? *Ranger*, left, and *Woodland non-leather boots*, *Glenn Tempest*. Page 77, a man can't afford to get snow in his boots! *Michael Klausen*

TRIX

Gaiter and zip maintenance

Three quick-fix Trix tips, by Geoff Wyatt

Gaiter strap replacement. When your gaiter under-boot strap has worn through consider replacing it with a length of plastic-coated curtain wire (a haberdashery relic from the 1960s). Cut to measure, allowing for some stretch—about 15 centimetres for walking boots and a maximum of 25 centimetres for mountaineering boots. Attach screw-in hooks to each end and crimp one to the outside of each gaiter. (You may need to add eyelets to the gaiter.) The curtain wire can be cut easily with pliers to shorten it to the right tension. Once installed you can expect a good life-span and easy handling in wet and cold weather for a bargain-basement price.

Rear-opening gaiter repair. Don't you hate those rear-joining Velcro and dome (snap fastener) gaiters which split open at the heel? Opening them with cold hands can be like trying to remove a child-proof lid! This easy modification will solve the dilemma and save you buying a new pair: it's a quick job for a pack repairer.

Sew one end of a 12 centimetre piece of 25 millimetre nylon pack-tape to the inside of the gaiter opening. (See diagram.) Add a dome (female) fastener to the other end so it can be secured to a male fastener on the outside of the closed gaiter above the existing heel dome. Be sure to leave a tail of two centimetres

above the fastener for easy unclipping with cold hands. This modified closure format provides improved mechanics without removing the existing closure system.

Exploding-zipper repair. My recent success with three exploding zips tempts me to share my solutions. The zips came apart mid-length. On each occasion I found the teeth in both the coil and tooth zips weren't completely meshing. It appeared that the metal zip-slider had gradually widened with age. With a pair of small pliers I lightly squeezed the inner and outer faces of the slider and—hey presto—the zip worked! To aid its up-and-down motion I applied some ski wax to the teeth to assist this action. ■

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.



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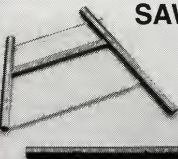
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from the Melbourne-based company *Vegan Wares* (015 834 518). RRP \$258. *Vegan Wares* is also the distributor of the *Woodland boot* which is of similar construction to the *Ranger*. RRP \$185.

The *Rossi Trekette* (the women's version of the popular *Trekker*) has a narrow cut to suit women's feet. It features a leather upper, Cambrelle lining and a rubber and polyurethane sole. RRP \$135.

Finally, *Clarks Shoes* has begun distributing *K Shoes* boots in Australia. There are two models: the *Wainwright* and the *Lady Wainwright*. Both models retail for about \$230 and both utilise a rubber/polyurethane sole, shock-absorbing mid-sole and a leather upper to which is attached a waterproof membrane (which is claimed to enable water vapour to escape).

MISCELLANEOUS

More water filters

Since the review of *water filters and purifiers* in *Wild* no 54 three more units have reached the author.

The *Guardian* by *Sweetwater* was mentioned in this department in *Wild* no 56. This filter unit is easy to set up and pump. While the manufacturer claims a life of up to 1000 litres, or 20 cleaning cycles, I found that I usually had to clean the filter after 10-20 litres. The unit is available from *Patagonia* for \$95; its external list-stopper filter costs \$12, the optional iodine stage is \$40, and a replacement main cartridge costs \$35.

The *Hiker* by *Recovery Engineering* (makers of the *Pur Scout*) was briefly mentioned in *Wild* no 55. It is a small mechanical filter weighing about 300 grams, with a weighted inlet pre-filter and a 0.5 micrometre filter with a carbon core. There is an optional external iodine stage coming soon. I found it both efficient and very easy to pump. You can't clean the filter, but the manufacturer guarantees to replace any cartridge which blocks in less than one year, even here in Australia! This makes it much cheaper per litre than most other mechanical filters I've tried. The unit sells for \$99; the cartridge is \$60.

The *Trekker* is a small, lightweight (180 grams), iodine-based purifier which can fit into a small bum-bag. A mesh filter stops large particles, a carbon cartridge reduces taste and removes medium particles, and an iodine cartridge is intended to kill all micro-organisms. It's easy to pump (although a little slow due to its size) and leaves a faint iodine taste and smell. A set of cartridges can treat 100 litres. The unit is available from *MASTA* for \$95; a replacement cartridge set sells for \$60.

Roger Coffin

Soft drink

The *Nalgene All-Terrain water-bottle*, distributed by *Outdoor Agencies*, is a standard-size bottle made of soft, flexible plastic, but its main feature is its wide 'mouth' which can be attached to *Pur* water-purification units. RRP \$19.95.

Waterproof socks

Dry feet after a day walking in South-west Tasmania—I'd like to see that! Well, it's possible...at least according to *Du Pont*, the

EQUIPMENT

company which makes *Seal Skinz waterproof socks*. The promotional package supplied to *Wild* informs us that the socks consist of three layers which, in combination, perform similarly to *Gore-Tex*, keeping water out while allowing moisture vapour to escape from within the sock. Extra comfort is sought by using seamless construction. There are two styles: the cheaper, all-season standard model and an insulated model. These socks are not as stretchy as normal socks, making them harder to put on—in fact the waterproof membrane should not be stretched. Although you can still expect to have sweaty feet, these lightweight socks should keep your feet drier, therefore warmer, than normal socks when used in damp situations. RRP \$59.95 and \$79.95 respectively.

Environmentally friendly camera?

Ever been on a spectacular trip only to find that your camera's battery is dead? Fear no more. The *Canon Prima Sol* is claimed to be 'the world's first fully-automatic solar-powered camera'—a lithium/iron battery is recharged by way of a solar panel on the front cover of the camera. In direct sunlight, the battery will fully charge in about eight hours. It should be widely available soon and will sell for about \$400.

For the tiger-walker...

If you can't keep up with your companion on those testing day-walks, don't despair. With the aid of an *Ultimate Nimbus day-pack* you may never need to pause for a rest again. The pack comes with a two-and-a-half-litre soft tank and a drinking-tube that can be positioned within easy reach of your mouth so you won't need to remove the pack to drink. With a capacity of ten litres and a number of small zip pockets, it should suit the tiger-walkers of the world. Distributed by *Outdoor Agencies*, the pack is widely available and sells for RRP \$229.

...and the gear-freak

If you've got everything, then don't read on. If you haven't, then you will surely find the *Aqua-Pac* water-resistant mobile-phone cover your next essential item. Designed to protect a 'mobile' from the harmful effects of water, sand and snow, you can even use your phone with the *Aqua-Pac* on! RRP \$24.95 from selected mobile-phone dealers. ■

'Help me, information, get in touch with my Marie...' the *Aqua-Pac* clear 'mobile-phone cover.



Products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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HOLY SMOKE!

Religion tackles the environment

BOOKS

God's Earth—Religion as if Matter Really Mattered

by Paul Collins (HarperCollins Religious, 1995, RRP \$19.95).

Perhaps the most important theological work in this country for many years, *God's Earth* challenges the Church to face the problems of the environment.

Paul Collins is a Catholic priest who is also well known as a broadcaster. His book evidences wide research, both in regard to the historical influences on current Church thinking and environmental issues.

Central to *God's Earth* is the assertion that religious traditions have been too human-centred. Collins argues that with the human species being the major cause of environmental damage, and with population growth alarmingly out of control, the focus by the Catholic Church on the perceived moral evil of contraception is a tragic diversion from the real issue facing humanity. Coming from a Catholic clergyman, this is feisty reading!

Collins argues that the Church has often refused to take seriously the physical world, and in so doing has lost touch with spirituality. Our wild places are under threat from many quarters. We defend them with economic, scientific and aesthetic arguments, but for many the real reason our forests and mountains are important is spiritual: these places are the sources of inspiration for us all, helping us to be in touch with a deeper and more enduring reality than our crass and commercialised civilisation can offer.

Paul Collins has begun to express that spiritual experience in a specifically Christian way.

Brian Walters

Yerranderie—Story of a Ghost Town

by Jim Barrett (published by the author, 1995, RRP \$10.95).

Place Names of the Blue Mountains and Burratorang Valley

by Jim Barrett (published by the author, 1994, RRP \$10.95).

Walking the Valley—Sydney Speleological Society Occasional Paper No 11

by Sonja den Hertog (published by the Sydney Speleological Society, 1994, RRP \$16.95).

Both these authors are well known. Jim Barrett has previously published small but excellent books on Kanangra Walls and the Cocks and Kowmung Rivers; Sonja den Hertog has written small books on Yerranderie and the Burratorang valley for the Oaks Historical Society. These three volumes continue in the same manner. It is good to see that people have had the time to record aspects of history such as these, which are of immense interest to bushwalkers.

Jim Barrett's new volume on Yerranderie is really a continuation of his previous series. Yerranderie was once a thriving mining town. It was a setting-off place for bushwalkers such as Myles Dunphy early this century and is still a focal point for bushwalkers—particularly those on Mittagong-Katoomba trips. Any bushwalker who has visited the town will want this new book.

The old photographs and the stories of the mines are fascinating.

Jim Barrett's volume on the origin of place names must have arisen as an offshoot to his historical research. He is fortunate to have walked in the area in question for a long time and to have good connections with people such as Claude Veyret—a bushman and horse-rider with a vast local knowledge. The book explains the origins of the names of most of the places that bushwalkers visit on their travels and, in so doing, reveals the rich undercurrent of history behind the names. Importantly, the book features an index of place names.

Sonja den Hertog's new book has been published by a caving club because it presents transcripts from an oral-history project involving some of the early Yerranderie and Burratorang valley residents who were also bushwalkers and cavers. It contains interesting recollections of the early exploration of Colong and Tuglow Caves as well as of early trips through the rugged upper Kowmung River gorges. One interesting, albeit fishy, tale involves a bushwalker who jumped into the Tuglow River near the falls and hit a 'three-foot trout'!

David Nole

Tramping the Southern Alps—Arthurs Pass to Mt Cook

by Sven Brabyn and Elise Bryant (published by the authors [75 Waimea Terrace, Christchurch, NZ], 1994, RRP \$NZ19.95).

New Zealand has so much to offer the visiting bushwalker (oops!—*tramp*, as they are called there) that it is good to see a new volume come out containing a wealth of up-to-date information. Previously the only way to get ideas for trips into this area—besides word of mouth—was to study articles from copies of the *New Zealand Alpine Club Journal* (the old ones contain more of interest to bushwalkers) or from the hard-to-get Jon Pascoe guide (*The Southern Alps—From the Kaikouras to the Rangitoto*) which, to the best of my knowledge, was last published in 1956. This old guide has been very highly regarded, so it is quite something to discover a new book which in many ways surpasses it. The new book is of interest to the bushwalker who wants to stay on tracks and camp in huts as well as to the transalpinist who wants to venture high into the 'hills'. The old favourite trips such as the Arthurs Pass Three Passes Trip and the Garden of Eden Ice Plateau are detailed here as well as a lot of country I'm sure would be unfamiliar to most Australians.

The book is well set out with references to both the old one-inch map series and the new (good but expensive) 1:50 000 series. Indications of walking time are given as well as hut

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and bivvy locations. Many of the trips described are of two days' duration (designed for the Kiwi trampler's weekend)—it would be easy to combine several of these to make up a long walk—but the book details plenty of extended trips as well. There are a lot of walks graded from easy to hard of various durations.

DN

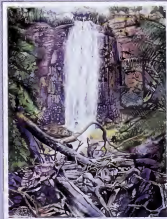
Walk the North-West

by Duncan Howe and Phil Webb
(Walk the West Publications, 1994,
RRP \$8.95).

The number of books of short walks in Tasmania has exploded in recent years. This one is of about average standard with interesting historical notes about the region and an excellent access map printed inside the cover. Most of the 20 walks take two hours or less. There are maps of only a few of

Walk the North-West

by Duncan Howe & Phil Webb



the walks; where there are maps, they are difficult to read and of little value. The strength of this book is its line drawings, some of which are excellent. While there is little of interest to the hardened walker, this is a good book for the general visitor.

John Chapman

On the Road to Cradle—Historical Day Walks of Moina, Middlesex and Black Bluff

by Nic Haygarth (Tiger Plain Books, 1994,
RRP \$7.95).

Another book of 14 short day walks in Tasmania, but this one is different: the walks aim to visit historical features in the region north of Cradle Mountain. This book has been well researched and contains many historical photographs and much information about the pioneers of the area. Clearly drawn maps are

On the Road to Cradle

Historical Day Walks of Moina,
Middlesex and Black Bluff



Nic Haygarth

Tiger Plain Books

provided; these are essential in a guide of this style, particularly one to an area where some of the tracks are poorly defined and lead to old mines. If you encounter a cloudy day on your next visit to Cradle Mountain, this little book provides some alternative walks of historical interest.

JC

Canyons Near Sydney

by Rick Jamison (published by the author, second edition 1995,
RRP \$8.00).

Rick Jamison has revised and expanded upon the already popular first edition of his canyon guide. One hundred and seven popular and relatively unknown canyons near Sydney are located and described.

Most entries contain trip length, difficulty, degree of swimming, abseils required (if any), starting-points, tricky sections or interesting parts of the canyon, and exit-points. The remainder give map references only. Historical information is included for selected canyons, but this is sometimes inaccurate, not having been verified from the source.

Canyon naming is a hot topic of debate among canyoning's devotees. While the first party to traverse a canyon generally claims naming rights, some 'explorers' prefer to leave canyons without official names. However, in this book Water Dragon Canyon, a Wollangambe River tributary, is

incorrectly named Crayfish Canyon; Dead Log should be Dead Tree; Harmonic Bells should be Harmonic Convergence; and Froth and Bubble is wrongly named and located. The naming system adopted for sections of the Wollangambe River is also confusing.

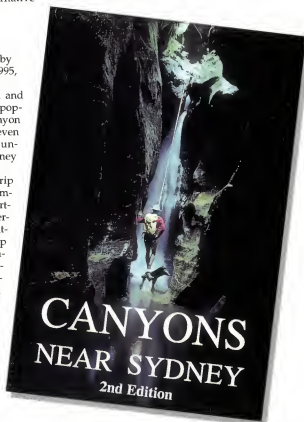
Most importantly, the author's shortsightedness in assuming a limitless supply of canyons will upset future canyoneers. In describing previously unpublished canyons, Rick Jamison has left himself open to further protest from his critics. Sensitive canyon environments are being ruined and new access tracks forged, largely in response to the publication of his previous guide. This isn't remedied by a pathetic three-line 'ethics' section in this edition. Canyoneers, both practitioners and guides, must aim to preserve these most beautiful and unique phenomena.

Andrew Cox

Victoria's Mountain Ash Ranges—A Green Travel Guide

by Melinda Nutting and Donna Sue Robson (Environment Victoria, 1995,
RRP \$9.95).

This booklet of 48 pages covers a wide range of features from ecotours to short walks in the mountain ranges north-west of Melbourne. It is strong on historical links with our past and contains an interesting time line and a very informative article on the Aborigines of Coranderrk. The text is sprinkled with notes about the plants, birds and animals of the region—these are



A hand holding a Silva compass against a scenic background of a mountain and a river. The compass is a circular, silver-colored model with a red needle and a red lanyard. It features a clear plastic cover with a ruler and a small magnifying glass. The background shows a large, rocky mountain peak partially covered in green vegetation, with a river flowing in the foreground. The sky is blue with some clouds.

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worth reading. As a guide it is not comprehensive and you will need more information. The tiny text size used is a problem and some maps can only be read with a magnifying glass. This volume is, however, a good source for background information to this popular area.

JC

Sustaining Our Forests

by Kara Joss (published by the author, 1994, RRP \$17.20 including postage and packing from 21 Muriel St, Falcon Bridge, NSW 2776).

The current debate about the future of our precious old-growth forests is often beset by misinformation. The native-forest sector of the timber industry has been adept at confusing the issues with false statistics and with arguments and assertions that are often demonstrable nonsense. The government forestry agencies have often assisted in this misinformation campaign.

Kara Joss began compiling statistics and information for her own interest but in the end she felt that her research deserved a wider audience. Written from a New South Wales perspective, the book is packed with statistics, diagrams and illustrations. It contains a wealth of material, much of it highly authoritative.

Some of the statistics are, however, of questionable value. For example, Joss quotes the Resource Assessment Commission's 1992 estimate that 40 700 people are employed in the forestry industry and related occupations. This figure contrasts with that obtained by more recent work, which suggests that the total employment in *native-forest* logging across Australia is actually 11 800—with half this number in government agencies!

This criticism, however, merely reflects the difficulty of obtaining reliable statistics, particularly when government agencies do their best to muddy the waters at every turn. The format of Kara Joss's book will allow for updating in future editions as better information becomes available.

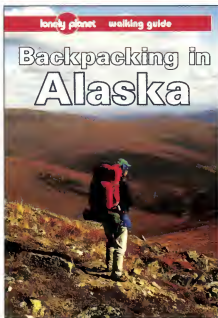
Particularly for NSW readers, but also for those in other States, this book will be an invaluable aid in debating the questions surrounding the protection of our few remaining native forests.

BW

Backpacking in Alaska

by Jim Dufresne (Lonely Planet, 1995, RRP \$18.95).

When the USA bought Alaska from the Russians in 1867 for \$US7.2 million they got a bargain! Likewise, if you buy this book you're getting a bargain. It will open up the entire 'Last Frontier' for you. Alaska is big enough and wild enough to have survived gold rushes and oil booms. It might even survive the boom of tourists who come to see its wildlife and wild places. Certainly, with 32 walk descriptions and 43 maps this guide will get you away from the sound of clicking shutters and out to where the wildlife can see you close up. With its practical advice on surviving bears and mega-river-crossings you might just come home again! Like all Lonely Planet guides this little book tells you the best places to go and what to take to maximise



your (low-cost) travel or, in this case, tundra-walking experience.

Stephen Buntin

FILMS & VIDEOS

White Water Nepal—A Rivers VidiGuide for Rafting and Kayaking by Andy Watt and Johnny Snyder (CF&V, 1994, \$40 plus postage and packaging from Adventure Film Company, 38 Mitchell St, South Mission Beach, Qld 4852).

Following in the footsteps of the book *White Water Nepal* comes the video. This is not a 'hair-boater' tale of expeditions and epics, but a 'do-it-yourself' guide to the best rivers in Nepal for the inexperienced rafter/canoer, or for those new to Nepal.

Probably the most important fact is that the cameramen are both keen paddlers with many years of experience in the Himalayas to draw on. They know what questions tend to be asked, and they have the answers.

Rafting and kayaking are in fact featured at all levels, and the commentary is lively and expert. Many of the well-known characters from this subculture of the Himalayas are featured giving advice and relating anecdotes. Several seasons in the compiling, the details are clear and correct. If there is any criticism, it is that you will need to sit and watch the video a number of times to absorb all the information, which also includes details of culture and conservation.

The video was released in Kathmandu late last year and is thoroughly up to date.

A great effort, and a must for anyone intending to visit the rivers of Nepal.

John Wilde

MAPS

Girraween and Bald Rock National Parks including Boonoo Boonoo National Park

(Hema Maps, 1995, RRP \$6.00).

As do most recent maps of National Parks, this one provides extra written material

relating to the environment, conservation and walking routes. In fact, this type of 'extended' map becomes a miniature walking guide on a single sheet of paper. Girraween, Bald Rock and Boonoo Boonoo National Parks encompass what south-east Queenslanders call the 'granite country', and this type of landscape, with its characteristic granite tors and outcrops, is in striking contrast to what usually comes to mind when one thinks of the Australian bush.

The topographic map is clear and accurate and contains the detail required for visitors to identify and locate the region's major attractions. Areas included in the National Parks are shaded in green while those areas outside are white. Perhaps several shades of green (or other colours) could have been used to distinguish the range of vegetation types. Although the text contains some minor punctuation problems, it is clear and to the point and makes following a particular route straightforward.

Robert Rankin

Camden Special—Topographic Image Map

(NSW Department of Conservation & Land Management, 1994, prototype—not for sale).

This is a special map developed by CALM for assessment purposes. It basically contains a large colour aerial photograph with an overlay of topographic information. It is at a scale of 1:25 000. Main roads and place names have been highlighted in different colours. Contours are in white and are clear in forested areas but difficult to differentiate in built-up or agricultural land. The contour interval is ten metres. No watercourses or creeks are marked.

Such a map certainly has advantages over a conventional topographic map. Individual trees can be seen, patches of scratchy scrub are easy to spot and avoid, and navigation may be easier for those of us without Global Positioning System receivers. However, it does have some drawbacks: there is no cadastral information (useful in that it indicates where private land and road reserves are); creeks, those useful sources of water for the thirsty bushwalker, are not marked and may be difficult to spot. The area covered by this prototype contains no cliffs so it is difficult to say what cliff information may appear on future sheets. The area covered on this sheet is slightly less than 50 per cent of that covered by a conventional 1:25 000 topographic map, so more maps may need to be purchased for a given walk. There is no indication of the cost of any future sheets in this special series but they would certainly be cheaper than aerial photographs; and this prototype is well printed and very clear—certainly much better than the old photo-mosaic maps that were once available for bush areas fringing Sydney.

If CALM goes ahead and produces a series of these new maps, useful as they are, I hope they will not replace the conventional topographic maps but rather be an additional choice.

DN

Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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THE BUCK STOPS HERE

Wild blamed for the standard of Australian 'outdoor' writing



The article by Quentin Chester, 'Bringing the Bush to Book' (*Wild* no 56) was very interesting. I, too, have long wondered why Australia has produced no writers of the calibre of Edward Abbey and Barry Lopez. However, unlike Chester, I have an answer which, perhaps, he was too circumspect to mention.

Wild, with its place as Australia's premier outdoor magazine for the past decade, is almost solely responsible for such a vacuum because since its inception it has failed to attract and nourish any writers of the style and quality discussed by Chester. And the reason for this is that *Wild*'s emphasis on the competitive, technological aspects of outdoor recreation is inimical to the intimate and poetic celebrations of the natural world that characterised the work of all the writers he mentioned.

None of these came on to the scene as fully-fledged writers but, with few exceptions, they were encouraged and supported by magazines and journals willing to accept their first essays and to continue publishing their work as they became established.

I suggest that if Chester is serious he approach his editor and publisher with a view to establishing an ongoing programme of positive encouragement for 'interpretive' writers and then, perhaps, within another decade we might have one or two writers of the insight and stature of Peter Matthiessen and Wendell Berry.

Ross Brownscombe
Carlingford, NSW

Earning his spurs

Track notes have a limited shelf-life and my own article 'The Great Western Spurs' in *Wild* no 56 has proved to be no exception to the rule. I wrote that article in 1980 and based it on experience gained mainly in the late 1980s. In late spring and early summer of 1994 I took the opportunity to cover the same ground again and had I been following someone else's track notes instead of my own I may well have found myself cursing their author!

The 'goat track' from Opera House Hut to the aqueduct intake on Siren Song Creek is now thoroughly overgrown and the walk across to Olsens Look-out from the hut turned into an epic struggle which got me to Olsens with not much daylight to spare—and I had counted on reaching that objective by lunchtime. I found the track itself still evident in most places—but I had the benefit of having travelled it several times before. As for the connecting track down to the Geehi and up to Olsens, I thought I could discern it here and there but the abundance of fallen timber and scrub made it easier to simply head

straight down the hill and up the other side than trying to stay with the track.

At the other extreme, the track on Hannells Spur has recently received some attention from Kosciusko National Park staff and it now provides a clear, easily-followed path all the way from top to bottom.

The map supplied with the article implies that a track exists on the 'unnamed' spur which reaches the main Townsend Spur from Tumbling Waters on the Geehi; as far as I know, no such track has ever existed...I was unpleasantly surprised in November 1994 by the extent of the 'scunge' on the lower part of that spur; it had not seemed that much of a thrash when I did it before, in 1989—but such impressions are, of course, subjective.

Finally, the slow and winding dirt road between Dead Horse Gap and Geehi will soon be no more, as the sealing and upgrading of the Alpine Way nears completion. The easier access may encourage more walkers to sample the delights of the Great Western Spurs—hopefully those who do so will not rely too slavishly on track notes!

Trevor Lewis
Braddon, ACT

Off the track

I read with interest the article 'Blind Leading the Blind', *Scroggin* (One Planet Newsletter), *Wild* no 57, but feel compelled to write regarding the mistakes in the article.

I lived in Papua New Guinea for 19 years from 1955...including seven years in Port Moresby which...is close to the start of the Kokoda Track/Trail. Reference to any atlas will show the correct spelling of Kokoda...

There has always been debate as to whether it is a track or a trail and to my knowledge in the early 1970s it was officially decided to call it the 'Track'...

The other error is the reference to 'Owen Corner', which is, in fact, 'Owers' Corner'. Aside from my memory of the area—which included many visits there and walking on the track itself—and speaking to Kokoda Track veterans, my reference is a book, *Battleground South Pacific*, with text by Robert Howlett, published in 1970...

I thoroughly enjoy *Wild* and have all issues since no 17 and find it most interesting and informative; however, I feel that a place of such significance to Australian history should be spelt correctly, although I suspect the article was not written by your team.

EL Farquharson
Browning, NSW

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahara, VIC 3181.

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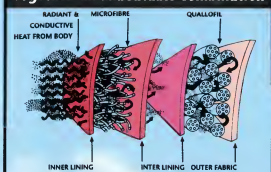
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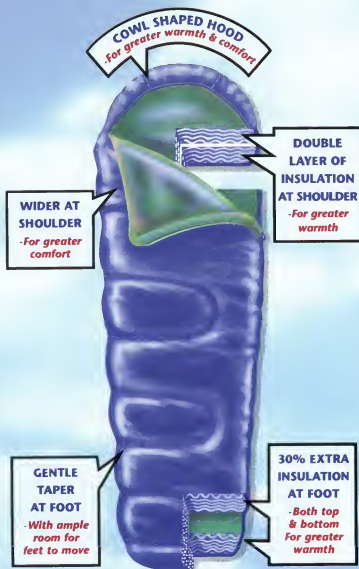
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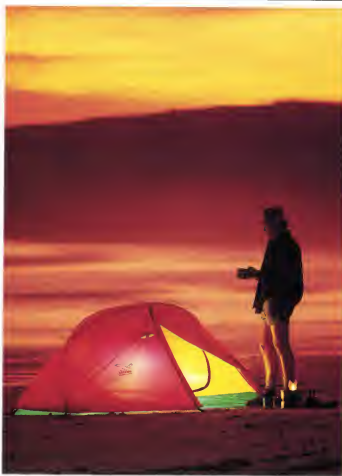
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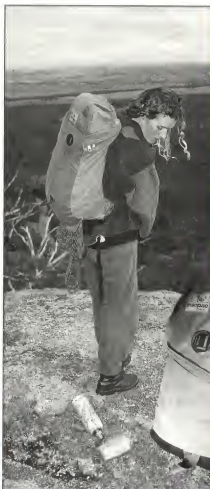
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Stewart Spooner flying high at Mt Hotham, Victoria. *Glenn Tempest*

Wild welcomes slides for this page; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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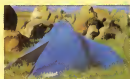


*Timberline Tents in use by
Tim Macartney-Snape
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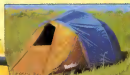
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(from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology)

Stanthorpe Qld -11°C • Charlottes Pass NSW -22°C • Mt. Hotham Vic -12.8°C • Yongala SA -8.2°C • Stirling Ranges WA -6.7°C • Shannon Tas -13°C • Alice Springs NT -7.5°C

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Jet-stream winds on Makalu (8481 m) Photo: Michael Groom

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STOPS THE
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CHILL FACTOR (Equal Temp on Exposed Flesh)

WIND SPEED (KM/H)	70	-7	-14	-20	-27	-33	-40	-46	-52	-59	-65
	60	-7	-13	-19	-26	-32	-39	-45	-51	-58	-64
	50	-6	-12	-18	-25	-31	-37	-43	-49	-56	-62
	40	-5	-11	-17	-23	-29	-35	-41	-47	-53	-59
	30	-3	-8	-14	-20	-25	-31	-37	-43	-48	-54
	20	0	-5	-10	-15	-21	-26	-31	-36	-42	-47
	10	5	0	-4	-8	-13	-17	-22	-26	-31	-35
		8	4	0	-4	-8	-12	-16	-20	-24	-28
AIR TEMPERATURES (°C)											

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